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**An Analysis of a Broad Selection of the Poetry and Philosophical Prose of
James Beattie within its Eighteenth-Century Context.**

By Virginia Lynn Sampson

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**A Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
To the Department of English Studies
University of Durham
December 2006**

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Abstract

This study explores the significance and relevant contexts of the collected poems of James Beattie, within a detailed study of his own prose works and wider eighteenth-century intellectual debates. His position on the periphery of the literary canon means that this thesis deals largely with primary material, which permits a more thorough and objective analysis than has been conducted before.

The first half of this study deals with Beattie's poetic output. Chapter 1 focuses on Beattie's first volume of poetry, Original Poems and Translations. In this chapter I analyse the poems within the context of other eighteenth-century poets, and explore Beattie's engagement with patronage, the eighteenth-century conventions for success as a new poet, and poetic genius. Chapter 2 deals with Beattie's second volume, Poems on Several Subjects, to illustrate the evolution in his ideas concerning the usefulness of poetry as a vehicle for philosophical investigation, and his engagement with eighteenth-century social and political issues. Chapter 3 explores his best known poem, The Minstrel; Or, the Progress of Genius. This chapter discusses the poem in its entirety and within the context of Beattie's career as a poet and philosopher. Chapter 5 focuses on Beattie's final volumes of poetry, which represent his desire to control his poetic legacy.

The second half of the study deals with selected critical and philosophical works, which provide insight into the development of Beattie's poetry and express in prose many of the subjects in his poetry. The most detailed attention in this section is given to the Essay on Truth, although there are also chapters examining other relevant critical works including Dissertations Moral and Critical, On Poetry and Music and On Laughter and Ludicrous Composition, and Beattie's collection of "Scoticisms."

There are few modern critical studies of Beattie, and many of them are limited to The Minstrel and to specific areas of interest within this work. This study's comparative and interdisciplinary approach to Beattie's poetry and selected prose aims to justify Beattie's inclusion in our study of the eighteenth century. It is also intended to raise awareness of Beattie's importance in the eighteenth-century and to illustrate his influence on three first-generation Romantic poets of generally recognised importance, namely Scott, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.

Acknowledgements

There are many people whose help, encouragement, and support, have been essential to me over the course of this project. I must first thank my family (with special thanks to my cousins Alex and Ben and to my brothers Rich and Lee) for their support and understanding throughout my life, and especially during the composition of this thesis. I would also like to thank my friends for their invaluable support throughout our time in Durham. I would also like to acknowledge the support I have received from countless members of the English department of the University of Durham throughout my course of study.

I owe a great debt to the late Dr. Roger J. Robinson, whose recent work on Beattie has made this project possible, and whose personal interest and support was invaluable in the early stages of this thesis. I would also like to thank his widow Jane, for her patience and assistance at a very difficult time.

I would also like to acknowledge the help of June Ellner, Michelle Gait, and their colleagues at the Historic Collections Library, University of Aberdeen, for their tireless assistance before and during my various trips to consult the Beattie Collection.

And finally, I will be forever grateful to my supervisor Dr. Robin Dix and his wife Alwine. Robin has provided unwavering support and encouragement since this project was in embryo, and has persevered with diligence and attention during a very difficult time. I have benefited personally and professionally from Robin's dedication and scholarly attention in ways that are far too numerous to record, and I consider myself very fortunate to have him as my supervisor.

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List of Abbreviations

<u>Biographia</u>	<u>Biographia Literaria: Or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions.</u> Ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate. 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton U. Press; London: Routledge, 1983. Vol. 7 of <u>The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.</u> 16 vols. 1969-2001.
<u>Dissertations</u>	<u>Dissertations Moral and Critical: On Memory and Imagination, On Dreaming, The Theory of Language, On Fable and Romance, On the Attachments of Kindred, Illustrations on Sublimity.</u> London: Strahan and Cadell; Edinburgh: Creech, 1783.
<u>Essay</u>	<u>An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism</u> also known in the period as the <u>Essay on Truth. An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism.</u> London: Dilly; Edinburgh: Creech, 1770.
<u>Essays</u>	<u>Essays: On the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism. On Poetry and Music, as they Affect the Mind. On Laughter, and Ludicrous Composition. On the Utility of Classical Learning.</u> Edinburgh: Creech, 1776.
<u>Examination</u>	<u>An Examination of Dr. Reid's <i>Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense</i>, Dr. Beattie's <i>Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth</i>, and Dr. Oswald's <i>Appeal to Common Sense in Behalf of Religion</i>.</u> Reprint of London: Johnson, 1775. Whitefish: Kessinger, 2003.
<u>Inquiry</u>	<u>An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense.</u> Ed. Derek Brookes. Edinburgh: Edinburgh U. Press, 1997.
"Letter"	"Letter: From a Regular Flow of Ideas and Impressions to the Idea of a Friend in the Country." Mossner, Earnest Campbell. "Beattie on Voltaire: An Unpublished Parody." <u>Romantic Review</u> 41 (1950): 26-32.
<u>OPT</u>	<u>Original Poems and Translations.</u> London: Millar, 1760-61.
<u>POSO</u>	<u>Poems on Several Occasions.</u> London: Dilly; Edinburgh: Creech, 1796.

PSS

Poems on Several Subjects. London: Johnston, 1766.

The Lay

The Lay of the Last Minstrel. The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. Edinburgh: Cadell, 1841.

The Minstrel

The Minstrel; Or, The Progress of Genius, A Poem. Book the First. 2nd ed. London: Dilly; Edinburgh: Creech, 1771; The Minstrel; Or, The Progress of Genius, A Poem. Book the Second. London: Dilly; Edinburgh: Creech, 1774.

The Prelude

The Prelude: 1799,1805,1850; Authoritative Texts: Context and Reception: Recent Critical Essays. Ed. M. H. Abrams, Stephen Gill and Jonathan Wordsworth. New York: Norton, 1979.

Introduction

It is interesting that James Beattie (1735-1803) is listed in the British Library catalogue as “James Beattie, the poet,” since his poetry, with the exception of The Minstrel; Or, the Progress of Genius (1771/4) has been relatively neglected by modern scholarship. Beattie’s career as a poet, philosopher, and teacher, spanned more than forty years, and his works illustrate the wide-ranging variety of his intellectual interests. The neglect of Beattie’s works has left a breach in the study of eighteenth-century poetical and philosophical topics, as well as the foundations of many Romantic ideas concerning the imagination and the intellect. This study aims to develop a more comprehensive analytical investigation into the corpus of Beattie’s poetic and philosophical works than has been attempted before.

Part of this investigation is meant to assess the influence and importance of Beattie’s various works to wider contemporary intellectual movements, such as the nature of poetical genius, issues of literary patronage, public self-fashioning, as well as the conflict between intellectual reasoning and the characteristics of the poetic imagination. This study also looks to explore the influence of Beattie’s works upon three first-generation Romantic poets, in an attempt to illustrate the far reaching influence of Beattie’s generally overlooked works of poetry, criticism, philosophy, and satire.

I have chosen to focus upon a relatively minor poet for a number of reasons. Firstly, semi-canonical figures such as Beattie are more generally representative of their age, and hence are more telling to study in terms of understanding the period in which they wrote, than authors such as Johnson and Wordsworth, who are generally agreed to be transcendent geniuses, and therefore are inevitably to some extent unrepresentative of their time. Secondly, focusing this study upon a minor poet enables me to spend more time with primary material

than is possible with a more canonical figure. Thirdly, my interests in this study include the interface between philosophy and literature, as well as textual history and bibliography, and James Beattie provides an unusually explicit opportunity to pursue these interests in one person, and one body of work. My final reason is to rectify what I perceive to be an injustice. I do not believe that modern scholarship has dealt justly with the works of James Beattie, and it is my intention to illustrate his integral position in the literary and intellectual world of the eighteenth-century, in an effort to earn for Beattie his rightful place in the dialogue of modern literary criticism of the eighteenth-century.

My design here is to illustrate that the current periphery relationship of Beattie's works to the literary canon is a tragedy of circumstance, rather than a reflection of the merit of his works, or his contribution to his literary community. The progression of Beattie's decline in popularity and literary favour can be traced through the publication history of his works after his death. From his death in 1803 to the beginning of the twentieth century more than one hundred editions and reprints of Beattie's works were published on both sides of the Atlantic. These editions vary widely in structure, while they generally include a memoir recounting the life of the author and reproduce many of the poems Beattie himself salvaged from oblivion, as well as many of his earlier poems which he refused to include in his final edition of poems in 1784.

Many of these Victorian editions link Beattie with eminent poets such as John Milton, James Thomson, and John Keats, as well as authors more obscure to modern readers, such as Robert Blair, Mark Akenside, and Thomas Gray. The connection of Beattie with authors of this calibre illustrates the continuing interest in his works up to the end of the nineteenth-century. Beattie's Victorian popularity is sharply contrasted by the relative obscurity of his works well into the twentieth-century.

Between 1900 and Roger Robinson's ten-volume collection of Beattie's works, there were only eight new editions published, and none of them included The Minstrel or indeed any poetry. This marked decline in interest in Beattie's poetry was probably the result of the movement toward specialization in scholarship. The twentieth-century was marked by a climate of specialization and intense theoretical analysis, and Beattie's works probably fell out of favour as a result of this desire to specialize and theorize. Beattie's works do not lend themselves to this type of analysis, since his works vary widely in subject and genre, and advance conservative philosophical and ethical views. The current academic trend seems to be reversing this telescopic method of investigation in favour of a more interdisciplinary perspective, one that recognises the versatility of authors as well as the intricacies and inevitable overlap between disciplines within the humanities. The current study operates within this critical context, by utilising a variety of evidence to bear upon Beattie's career. Autobiographical, bibliographical, cultural, historical, and philosophical contexts are essential to a full understanding of Beattie's career, and the influence of these works upon subsequent writers.

Though literary criticism has largely moved away from studies dealing with single authors in favour of more thematic and theoretical work, Beattie's career is particularly suited to this type of enquiry. As Robin Dix has recently argued with elegance and persuasion, literary criticism that denies the power and individualism of an author can lead to an underestimation of that author's contribution to their wider intellectual and literary community, and the generations that followed.¹ I agree with Dix that though biographical research, textual bibliography, and wider historical context are areas of research that seem to have gone out of fashion, they can enable a more informative and accurate investigation into

¹ Robin Dix's new monograph on the literary career of Mark Akenside throws into sharp relief the value and importance of single author studies.

the merits and characteristics of a poet and his literary culture.²

James Beattie is generally perceived by eighteenth-century specialists in terms of his success with The Minstrel, which is considered to be a worthy anomaly amongst a body of hitherto neglected poems. To Scottish literary specialists Beattie is generally remembered as the author of a lively pre-Robert Burns poem in Scots Dialect. Romantic studies recognise in The Minstrel a feeble attempt to investigate the characteristics of poetic genius so eloquently explored by Wordsworth in The Prelude, as well as characterisations in The Excursion which bear strong resemblance to Beattie's. I hope this study will illustrate that these generally accepted perceptions rest upon an incomplete body of evidence, because of the inaccessibility of Beattie's works in the twentieth-century, as well as the limited critical engagement with his works since his death.

There is a limited critical tradition exploring Beattie's poetry and prose works. In the past few decades, critics have begun to examine particular elements of The Minstrel, and its possible influence upon later poets. One of these modern scholars is Everard King, whose criticism deals with many of Beattie's works, but I am reluctant to recommend his criticism because it is plagued with sweeping statements, and critical analysis that is at times lacking in supporting evidence. King's study, James Beattie's The Minstrel and the Origins of Romantic Autobiography is significant because it introduces Beattie's work to modern scholars, but King's analysis repeatedly lacks support and makes many generalisations. King also prints a conflated version of The Minstrel in the appendix to his study, which led me to a number of bibliographical difficulties concerning the publication history of the poem. The text King includes in his appendix bears no date, but includes the final advertisement Beattie drafted, which he dated 1777. The inclusion of the advertisement led me to assume that the text is

² See Robin Dix, Literary Career of Mark Akenside: Including an Edition of His Non-Medical Prose (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson UP, 2006) 15-16.

from '77, but in reality the text is a mixture of an 1821 edition and King's own textual changes.³ More recent scholarship investigates the complexities of Beattie's works, such as Conrad Brunstrom's examination of the impact of nature upon the mind, and its expression in the depictions of nature in The Minstrel, as well as its relationship to the philosophy of the Essay on Truth. Kathryn Sutherland focuses upon the characterisation of the ancient minstrel from its popularisation by Thomas Percy, through the character of Beattie's minstrel, and its connection with the characteristics of minstrels portrayed by William Wordsworth. Laura Bandiera also argues that The Minstrel had an influence on Wordsworth's poetry, but her study focuses on the ways in which the preface to Lyrical Ballads attempts to rejuvenate the character of the itinerant minstrel poet described in Thomas Percy's "Essay on the Ancient Minstrels in England."

Though Beattie's critical prose has remained relatively obscure, Richard Terry in his recent study of the evolution of the genre of the mock-heroic, explores the essay "On Laughter and Ludicrous Composition" within the context of the eighteenth-century rehabilitation of the burlesque, as well its relevance to the evolution of eighteenth-century theories of laughter.⁴ Similarly, David Hill-Radcliffe, in his investigations into the evolution of culture, English studies, and eighteenth-century Spenserian imitations, has linked James Beattie with the greatest writers of the eighteenth-century. However, his criticism reinforces many common misconceptions concerning the composition and content of The Minstrel.

³ For an in depth investigation into bibliographical issue raised by King's appendix, see Roger J. Robinson, The Poetry of James Beattie: A Critical Edition. Diss. University of Aberdeen, 1997 pp. 26-28

⁴ Richard Terry, Mock-Heroic from Butler to Cowper: An English Genre and Discourse. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). See pp. 245-46.

Detailed scholarly investigations of the works of James Beattie have been made possible by Roger J. Robinson, who collected all of Beattie's known poetical works in his doctoral thesis, and proceeded to introduce a ten-volume edition of Beattie's works. The collection contains three editions of poems and his complete prose, much of which remained unpublished until this collection. Though Robinson's collection appears comprehensive, "Hints for an Answer to Dr. Priestley's Remarks on the Essay on Truth" (AUL MS 30/46) is not included or referred to in any of these volumes, probably because it remained unfinished upon Beattie's death. Though unfinished, this manuscript work sheds new light upon Beattie's engagement with Joseph Priestley, as well as his private desire to vindicate himself from Priestley's criticism.⁵ Robinson also collected Beattie's complete correspondence, which is available to scholars for the first time. These recent publications have made the corpus of Beattie's letters, poetry, and prose accessible to modern scholars for the first time, enabling a more comprehensive investigation into his works than critics such as Everard King were able to conduct, given the relative obscurity and inaccessibility of these works before the new publications.

This study begins with Beattie's first volume of poetry, Original Poems and Translations (1760/1) and traces the evolution of his poetic career through to what he considered his final poetical volume, The Minstrel, in Two Books: With Some Other Poems (1784). To gain a full understanding of Beattie's poems, his philosophical and critical essays are of vital importance, because they present in plain language the intellectual underpinnings of much of Beattie's poetry, and further develop many of the conflicting issues that he attempts to reconcile through his verse.

⁵ See p. 171.

Beattie's works are dealt with in the order of their original publication,⁶ which enables one to trace the progression of the poetical revisions as well as the evolution of his career as a poet, and the conflict between his poetical ambition and the prose works he considered it his duty to publish. The study is limited to Beattie's poetical volumes rather than anonymous magazine submissions, with the exception of "To Alexander Ross," a short poem written in Scots Dialect. This poem is included for three reasons; first, it is unique among Beattie's poems because it is the only one written in Scots dialect. Second, it is relevant to Beattie's collection of "Scoticisms," which was intended to regulate the usage of English among Scottish students, whose success in a United Kingdom in part relied upon their ability to converse and compose in English, the language of the realm. And finally, it is included because the poem was composed and published as a means of exciting a readership for the poetry of Alexander Ross. The poem represents Beattie's only public, though initially anonymous, public foray as a patron.

From his first volume of poetry, it is evident that Beattie is making a conscious attempt to work within eighteenth-century conventions set out for the serious minded intending to embark upon a poetic career. Original Poems and Translations contains many poems in conventional styles, such as elegy, epitaph, and translations. The volume deals with themes which remain important throughout Beattie's career. These themes include, but are not limited to, the effectiveness of Christian afterlife as consolation for the pain of loss, the conflict of ambition and inspiration in a poet's mind, and characteristics of poetic genius.

⁶ The exception to this is the Scots dialect poem "To Alexander Ross" which is included in chapter 6 with the "Scoticisms" since the analysis of the poem is compelling within the context of Beattie's Scottish language work.

The way in which his ideas concerning these issues change over the course of his career can be traced through the revisions of the early poems, and the changes illustrate his continuing desire to revise his public stance on these important subjects. The pamphlet poems printed anonymously in 1765 signal his desire to engage with contemporary political issues as well as current intellectual debates. His political and social engagement are pronounced in his pamphlet poem, “On the report of a Monument to be erected in Westminster-Abbey, to the Memory of a Late Author” (1765) and his desire to manipulate poetry as an adequate vehicle for reasoned philosophical argumentation begins with “The Judgement of Paris” (1765). His second volume Poems on Several Subjects (1766) incorporates many of the poems from Beattie’s first volume as well as the pamphlets. It also includes several new poems that reinforce the conscious development of his poetic profile by including poems that range more widely in subject and form.

The Minstrel; Or, the Progress of Genius is the climax of Beattie’s poetic career, and brought him contemporary fame and renown. Its innovative use of the Spenserian verse form, its complex account of the growth of a poetically inclined mind from youth to intellectual maturity, and the moments of didacticism concerning the role of education and the function of philosophy, set the poem apart from Beattie’s earlier works. The simultaneous success of this poem with his most well known philosophical work, An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism (1770), brought Beattie contemporary fame, and established his reputation as an important thinker and a great poet. In his later years Beattie takes care to perpetuate this reputation through his final volumes of poetry, and throughout the numerous editions of the Essay, as well as his other critical works.

Beattie's poetical volumes after The Minstrel⁷ represent his final forays into the public domain as a poet. The poems in the volumes are generally new versions of previously printed works that postdate the first publication of The Minstrel, and the care which Beattie took to revise them illustrates his desire to protect and preserve for posterity those poems which he hoped would encapsulate his career. The simultaneous composition of The Minstrel and the Essay, is one of the superficial connections between these works, but a close investigation of the poem highlights the importance of the philosophical arguments made in the Essay to the thematic development of the poem.

The connection between these works reinforces the close connection in Beattie's works between philosophy and poetry, but as a philosophical work the Essay has been discounted by modern scholars, because of its harsh treatment of David Hume as well as its lack of proper evidence for his assertions. Despite modern condemnation, the Essay is an attempt to illustrate the illogical aspects of sceptical philosophy through the use of what is commonly known as the philosophy of common sense. Beattie's philosophical treatise was intended as a rebuttal of the sceptical doctrines of David Hume's A Treatise on Human Nature (1739), and so its style of argument deviates from conventional philosophical investigation and analysis. Because of these flaws, modern scholars have limited their engagement with the arguments of the Essay, but a close investigation of Beattie's ideas is necessary to a full understanding of the philosophy which animates a great deal of his poetry.

⁷ Poems on Several Occasions (1776); The Minstrel, in Two Books: With Some Other Poems (1779 and 1784).

Beattie's two unpublished prose satires are also inextricably linked to his philosophy as expressed in the Essay. "The Castle of Scepticism" and "Letter: From a Regular Flow of Ideas and Impressions to the Idea of a Friend in the Country"⁸ are hitherto unexplored responses by Beattie to the dangerous consequences of scepticism and the character of its proponents. The second satire is written in the style of Voltaire's Dictionnaire Philosophique (1764) and parodies this work in style and content. These two prose satires show that the consequences of scepticism and its power to corrupt, as well as the implications of other doctrines he considered to be impious, were ever present in Beattie's mind.

After editing the 1784 volume, Beattie made a conscious decision to abandon poetry, and turned his attention to the preparation of various essays, which were the culmination of the many topics which he lectured on during his tenure as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Marischal College, Aberdeen. Many of these essays deal with subjects that are closely related to the themes in Beattie's poetry, and they also provide insight into the development of his poetic career. These essays also illustrate that Beattie continued to intellectually engage with many of the issues which had occupied his poetry.

Each essay which is investigated in this study is inextricably linked to Beattie's overall philosophical system, and the importance of this system to his poetry should not be underestimated. "On Poetry and Music as they Affect the Mind" (1776) is an example of the way in which Beattie's poetical investigations continue in his prose. The essay is divided into two parts, the first focusing on the role of the poet in society, characteristics of poetic genius, and poetical language, the second on poetry's relationship to music and its impact upon the mind. "On Laughter and Ludicrous Composition" (1776) shows his willingness to engage intellectually with varying theories, and develops a theory closely related to that of

⁸ These satires were unpublished in Beattie's lifetime, and were first transcribed and published by the Hume scholar Ernest Campbell Mossner. See pp. 187-88.

Mark Akenside. The essay is a critique of contemporary theories of ridicule and the causes of laughter in the mind. The other three essays which are integral to this study are taken from Dissertations Moral and Critical (1783). The collection originated as lectures to Beattie's students, and was intended as an introduction to youth of university age to a wide variety of intellectual topics.⁹ Since this is a literary study with limited space, I have not included those of Beattie's works that have no relevance to his poetic career.¹⁰

Beattie's various prose works, both fiction and non fiction, deal with many important questions concerning a variety of intellectual issues. His works highlight what he considered to be his duties and responsibilities, as a philosopher, a teacher, and a poet. He wrote the Essay in an effort to vindicate religious tenets in the face of sceptical philosophers, and Dissertations and the "Scoticisms" to better prepare the young for their higher education. His two unpublished prose satires illustrate his continuing attempts to reconcile philosophical investigation and the creative imagination. The final chapter of this study looks to three first generation Romantic poets, Sir Walter Scott, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Wordsworth, in order to illustrate the far reaching impact of Beattie's poetical, philosophical, and critical works. Sir Walter Scott's Lay of the Last Minstrel (1804) illustrates the way in which Beattie's narrative continued to exert influence on Scottish poetry. Scott's depiction of the ancient minstrel in his narrative shares many qualities with Beattie's Hermit, similarities too numerous for them to be merely coincidental. Everard King has focused on the connection between selected poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and The Minstrel, but their

⁹ The essays in this collection that are relevant to this study are: "Of Memory and Imagination," "On Fable and Romance," and "Illustrations on Sublimity."

¹⁰ Beattie published numerous volumes on a variety of subjects. Theology and religious practice (Evidences of the Christian Religion and "A Letter to the Reverend Hugh Blair on the Improvement of the Psalmody in Scotland"), Linguistics ("The Theory of Language") and various others which vary widely in subject (Elements of Moral Science, "On the Attachments of Kindred," "On Dreaming," and "On the Lawfulness of Slavery").

philosophical connection has been underestimated. Coleridge's Biographia Literaria (1817) is not thought to have any connection to Beattie's philosophical system, since their two approaches are distinctly different. However, the connection between Coleridge and Beattie is clear in the theory of the imagination expounded by the former in the Biographia. Though Coleridge's philosophical ideas are most often connected to German idealists, his works are in many ways a reaction to eighteenth-century theories concerning poetry, the imagination, and the characteristics of genius.

Modern scholarship has generally limited the connection between Beattie and William Wordsworth to the similarities between The Minstrel and various verbal echoes, but they share more than just occasional diction. Wordsworth's unpublished fragment "Essay on Morals" illustrates his intellectual engagement with the tenets of Beattie's version of common sense philosophy. The 1800 "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads presents his ideas concerning the role of the poet, the purpose of poetry, and deals with poetic diction, which is similar in many respects to Beattie's arguments in the essay "On Poetry and Music." These works highlight possible engagement with Beattie's philosophical and critical works, and there is also striking evidence in The Prelude: Or, Growth of a Poet's Mind (1805) of the presence of Beattie's poetical and philosophical influence upon Wordsworth.

Though modern scholarship has paid Beattie's career slight attention, his poetical, philosophical, and critical works represent an engagement with many commonplace eighteenth-century issues. His career as a philosopher and teacher encapsulates the eighteenth-century crisis over what is believable and what is not, in terms of philosophy, religion, and poetic narrative. The Essay was intended to prove that Christianity was believable and that philosophical inquiry based solely on argument and sense data could not prove it false. In constant opposition with Beattie's desire to vindicate religion and morality

from sceptical inquiries was his poetic imagination. His career as a poet exemplifies the way in which a poet in the eighteenth-century was meant to introduce himself into the public arena, and to cultivate consciously a public reputation through his publications. James Beattie represents the eighteenth-century engagement with a variety of topics and disciplines. The works explored in this study illustrate his wide-ranging interests in contemporary philosophical, critical, and poetical issues, his contemporary importance in various roles, and the far-reaching impact of his career upon the next generation of poets.

Chapter 1: The Making of a Poet, the Inaugural Volume

Beattie's Early Life

James Beattie was baptized on 25 October 1735 in Laurencekirk, County Kincardine, Scotland. The youngest child of a less than affluent farmer/shopkeeper, his opportunities for advancement and professional success were slim. Through the industry of his elder brother David¹¹ and his own academic prowess Beattie won a bursary to attend Marischal College Aberdeen in 1749. Upon completing his MA in 1753 he was installed in the parish of Fordoun in Kincardineshire, serving as precentor and schoolmaster. He hoped to progress to an ecclesiastical career, and his position in the parish allowed him to earn a living while pursuing the study of Divinity requisite for all wishing to enter into holy orders. He attended courses at Marischal and King's Colleges, when not teaching his own students in the parish, which grounded him in the Christian doctrine that would permeate his life's works. Beattie was nineteen when he took up this post, and it was during this time that he composed much of his early poetry.¹² Beattie's biographers depict this five year period as a starting point for Beattie's lifelong attachment to natural scenery, and its influence on the development of his poetic mind.

¹¹ Beattie's father James, died, when he was seven, and his elder brother David cared for his mother and siblings. From Sir William Forbes, An Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Creech, 1806) 1:14-15.

¹² Beattie published twelve poems in the Scots Magazine before his first volume of poetry, Original Poems and Translations, appeared in 1760. See Roger Robinson's introduction to Sir William Forbes, An Account of the Writings of James Beattie, Sir William Forbes (London: Thoemes, 1999) xxxvi.

The biographies of Beattie vary in the letters they reproduce, and the emphasis they place upon various phases in his career. Alexander Bower's biography, An Account of the Life of James Beattie (1804) is the earliest and arguably most corrupt of these volumes. A nephew of Beattie's provided Bower with intimate details of the poet's youth, but the details of his later life are significantly lacking, and so his early life is the main focus of the work. Bower minimizes the importance of Beattie's prose works while celebrating his poetic success with The Minstrel. Bower justifies his lack of respect for these works by citing their inextricable link to Beattie's lectures on Moral Philosophy, which he considers to be a serious failing. He argues that the "prose works however must (with two exceptions) be considered as part of those lectures which he delivered to the students under his care."¹³ A more complete biography was published by Beattie's long-time friend Sir William Forbes shortly before his own death in 1806. Forbes is able to present a more comprehensive view of Beattie's life and career, as a result of their close friendship, and the assistance of Beattie's nephew-in-law George Glennie.¹⁴ The Fettercairn Papers in the National Library of Scotland contain correspondence between them from the onset of Beattie's final illness in 1803 through the composition and publication of the biography.

One hundred years later, Margaret Forbes, a great grandniece of Beattie, composed Beattie and His Friends (1904) which was intended to supplement Forbes's earlier Life. She presents some letters which William Forbes felt were not fit for public perusal, because of their personal nature. These new letters enrich the narrative of Beattie's life, and provide insight into his motives and ambitions. The differences in style and perceptions of evidence reflect on the three biographers themselves rather than Beattie. The two Forbeses present a

¹³ Alexander Bower, An Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie, LL.D. (London: Baldwin, 1804) 224. Bower points to the simplicity of Beattie's prose style as a flaw that resulted from the essays beginning as lectures to his students: "He therefore studied the greatest plainness of expression, and selected his illustrations from these familiar topics which were best accommodated to the capacity of his hearers." Bower, 224.

¹⁴ Glennie and his wife cared for Beattie in the final years of his life.

man whose poetic achievements are matched only by his philosophical and critical essays, while Bower focuses on The Minstrel. Add to this great literary talent a sincere commitment to students, and they claim, the person of James Beattie is conveyed clearly in its essentials.

The biographies portray a young man whose poetic imagination is growing active and more sophisticated in the solitude and natural splendour of Fordoun. The remote parish did not present Beattie with the kind of intellectual companionship he knew while at university. Despite this lack of intellectual discourse, “he had a never failing resource in his own mind, in those meditations which he loved to indulge, amidst the beautiful and sublime scenery of that neighbourhood.”¹⁵ His solitude allowed him to experience nature in a way that had a profound and lasting impact on his life, as evidenced by his preoccupation with nature, its influence, and the consequences of that influence, throughout his career. William Forbes depicts his communion with nature in similar terms to those Beattie uses to describe his poet Edwin. Beattie would often, “saunter in the fields the live-long night, contemplating the sky, and marking the approach of the day; and he used to describe with peculiar animation the pleasure he received from the soaring of the lark in a summer morning.”¹⁶

The young James Beattie is placed amidst the scenery that would animate his poetic career, which Beattie strove to validate in his first volume of poetry. His early “indulgence” in solitude, melancholy, and the impact of nature on the imagination pervades this volume, which he would later reject as self-destructive and impractical. Clearly, the biographers are presenting the young James Beattie as an original poetical genius, as Beattie thought of himself when young. But his opinion of the value of these early works would change dramatically over the course of his career, adding a particular poignancy to this initial poetic endeavour.

¹⁵ W. Forbes, 1:20.

¹⁶ W. Forbes, 1:21-2.

His first presentation of himself as a named poet in Original Poems and Translations (1760/1)¹⁷ is a self-conscious presentation by a poet determined to succeed within the conventions set forth by his contemporaries. He aspires to the greatness of Addison and Pope, and begins his career with conventional form and topics. His poetry is influenced throughout his career by philosophical ideas, and in this volume in particular he focuses on the debate over poetical genius. Theories of genius remain important throughout Beattie's career. Various theorists explore the characteristics of natural poetic genius he wished to present in himself, and to the wider world. Years later, when he composes The Minstrel, he explores the consequences of indulgence in this kind of engagement with nature and the effect of learned knowledge upon a mind trained by nature. His relationship with theories of genius illustrate his interest in poetry as a vehicle for philosophical topics, and show that from the beginning of his poetic career, philosophy and poetry are for him, inextricably linked.

William Sharpe in A Dissertation upon Genius (1755) argues that the acquisition of learning and the knowledge of experience are the defining factors of genius. He argues "Genius, or Taste, is not the result of simple nature, not the effect of any cause exclusive of human assistance, and the vicissitudes of life; but the effect of acquisition in general."¹⁸ In Sharpe's system the person who is best enabled to acquire knowledge, both human and natural, is the truest genius, and this genius is improved by the possessor's industry alone. He further argues that "Vivacity of Genius therefore cannot be inherent in nature herself"¹⁹ since it is a catalyst for learning rather than an active force. For Sharpe, genius is the result of nature and humanity in harmony.

¹⁷ For an explanation of the alternative dating of Original Poems and Translations, see Appendix, pp. 313-14.

¹⁸ William Sharpe, A Dissertation upon Genius (Delmar: Scholars, 1973) 6.

¹⁹ Sharpe, 9.

Alexander Gerard's²⁰ Essay on Taste (1758) presents an opposing theory. Gerard argues that only a fine imagination can produce genius, and that taste acts as judge over the products of genius.²¹ This line of thought becomes the dominant one in the field, developed by William Duff and Immanuel Kant among others. For Gerard: "Quickness of taste is essential to poetic genius; and Horace has assigned to poets the correspondent turn of passion, when he characterises them [as] genus irritabile."²² Thus, genius is distinguished by the use of the imagination and the taste that moderates the products of genius. In this system the passions are ruled by taste; genius enables the imagination to conjure sublime natural images, and these images remain true to their counterparts in nature. It is the vivacity and force of these faculties that set genius apart.

Edward Young's Conjectures on Original Composition (1759) characterises natural genius in a way that can be inferred in Beattie's OPT. According to Young: "An Original may be said to be of a vegetable nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of Genius; it grows, it is not made: Imitations are a sort of manufacture wrought up by those Mechanics, Art and Labour, out of pre-existent materials not their own."²³ Young argues that genius is a product of nature and is innate, the genius grows in nature not in practical learning or practices. Beattie's excursions into the wilderness at Fordoun exemplify this kind of organic growth of genius; the occasion which led to the composition of his translation of Lucretius's invocation of Venus from the first book of De Rerum Natura throws into sharp relief the similarities between the young Beattie and Young's depiction of poetic genius.

²⁰ Gerard served as Professor of Moral Philosophy when Beattie took his degree, and served as Professor of Divinity after 1760. He was also a founding member of the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen. Forbes explains "Dr. Beattie and he were constant and intimate friends from their first acquaintance." W. Forbes, 1:35.

²¹ The date given above refers to the first edition of Gerard's essay. Because the first edition is difficult to find, my quotations refer to a reprint of the 3rd edition. Alexander Gerard, An Essay on Taste: Together with Observations Concerning the Imitative Nature of Poetry 3rd ed. (Delmar: Scholars, 1978) paraphrased from 165, 166, 167.

²² Gerard, Taste 187.

²³ Edward Young, Conjectures on Original Composition (Leeds: Scholar, 1966) 12.

Beattie met his first patron Francis Garden (Sheriff of Kincardine and later Lord Gardenstone) while in Fordoun, and their relationship would prove important to Beattie's professional advancement to the chair of Moral Philosophy. Garden had heard of the youth's poetical talents, and to test them he asked Beattie to translate the invocation. The task chosen suggests that Garden was also aware of Beattie's predilection for philosophical material: by requesting the invocation he allowed Beattie to prove his poetic mettle, while acknowledging his philosophical interests. And so "In compliance with this request, Beattie retired into the adjoining wood, and in no long time produced the translation, bearing all the marks of original composition."²⁴ It was in retreat amidst natural scenery that Beattie composed the poem, illustrating the importance of nature as the inspiration of the poetic mind. His first collection of poems reinforces the importance of natural images and the intellectual impressions made upon his mind, when life and tragedy had not yet tempered his ambition.

Beattie consciously depicted Original Poems and Translations as the product of his experiences in nature, so as to reinforce his character as a natural genius, as well as a serious poet through chosen themes and verse forms. The poems in this volume might initially appear conventional in content, but throughout Beattie's poetry, the "occasion [that sparks composition] provides a satisfyingly opaque grounding for the mental event which it occasions, that mental event becomes the focus of the poem, until at last the mental event becomes itself the ground of the poem."²⁵ The poems of this volume introduce many of the philosophical, political, and emotive subjects that will occupy Beattie throughout his career. Like his favourite poet, Thomas Gray, he uses single occasions and activities as the basis for complex intellectual contemplation. The varying poetic genres in the volume illustrate the already diverse poetic interests of Beattie's imagination.

²⁴ W. Forbes, 1:25.

²⁵ John Dolan, Poetic Occasion from Milton to Wordsworth (London: Macmillan, 2000) 123.

Original Poems and Translations (1760/1)

The dedication of Original Poems and Translations (1760/1) to James Earl of Erroll, Lord High Constable of Scotland, etc. is complex in both meaning and intent. Superficially it was an expression of gratitude to the Earl for his aid in securing for Beattie a royal appointment to the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Marischal College, Aberdeen, at the end of September 1760. Bower recounts that “He (Mr. Arbuthnot) actually prevailed upon his Lordship [Erroll] to recommend him to his Majesty, as one well worthy of being appointed to a vacant professorship.”²⁶ Forbes explains the dedication as a “testimony of gratitude to that nobleman, to whom he was indebted for his chair in the university.”²⁷

It is significant that in his first extended public display Beattie does not separate his life as poet from that of philosopher, because in later years his philosophical duties will be at odds with his poetical ambition, and eventually lead him to abandon poetry in favour of his critical works. His poetic career is not yet in conflict with his duties as a teacher or his philosophical interests, but throughout his life the relationship between poetic inclination and philosophical duty would become increasingly at odds. Beattie’s early experiences with patronage present an interesting addition to the debate over its decline in the eighteenth century and throughout. His early career supports Dustin Griffin’s argument that the forms of literary patronage changed rather than disappeared in the eighteenth-century in response to the changing position of both author and patron.²⁸ The eighteenth century saw the growth of authorship as a profession; prominent patrons, consequently, came to see their function increasingly as being instruments of introduction and influence rather than economic support.

²⁶ Bower, 145.

²⁷ W. Forbes, 1:47.

²⁸ Dustin Griffin, Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), Paraphrased from 5-7.

An example of this in Beattie's later career is the publication by subscription of Essays in 1776, which was proposed by Beattie's friend, the famous bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu, as a means of securing Beattie a more stable financial situation. Scotland had its own system of patronage, and its power extended beyond the literary world. As Robert Emerson argues, within the political and social realm of Scotland, "Without the endorsement and sanction of patrons, little happened."²⁹ It was through this system that Beattie would make his way as poet, philosopher, and teacher. Francis Garden, had, after all, introduced him to intellectual members of his local community, which enabled him to engage in the limited amount of intellectual discourse available in Fordoun.³⁰

Original Poems and Translations, hereafter OPT, is a new poet's conscious attempt to establish himself using accepted modes of poetry. Beattie's perceptions of the paths of the careers and characters began with conscious self-fashioning, Beattie believed that "Great poets forge their own identities"³¹ in their own works by presentation and content. His preface betrays the self-awareness that characterises this initial foray into the public sphere. He begins by depicting himself in universal terms, with general humility: "Few writers are qualified to form a proper judgment of their own talents"³² and so they must rely on public rejection or ovation. He then makes a direct request to his readers: "to the goodnatured Reader...[the author] will apologize for his rashness (if it shall be deemed rashness) in venturing abroad into the public view" (vi). His supplication before his readership is not a complete fabrication, but it does work to his advantage: the reader is intentionally put into a sympathetic mood by the humble author's supplication, and will read (the author hopes) with

²⁹ Robert Emerson, "The Contexts of the Scottish Enlightenment," The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment, ed. Alexander Broadie (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 16.

³⁰ At this time he met James Burnet (later Lord Monboddo) and this acquaintance led to Beattie's composition of an elegy upon the death of Monboddo's sister, Elizabeth Walker.

³¹ Lawrence Lipking, The Life of the Poet: Beginning and Ending Poetic Careers (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981) 4.

³² James Beattie, Original Poems and Translations (London: Millar, 1760) v.

this persona embedded in the mind.

Beattie's first volume is one in which the "reader who would make sense of the book must allow himself to be instructed by it in how to read"³³ through the structure and the text itself. The other topics of the preface deal with the translations of Virgil's *Eclogues*, and the invocation from *De Rerum Natura*. He does not claim to write a work comparable to the translations by Dryden and Warton, but would "be thought only an humble Copier of VIRGIL" (ix). Yet he does not completely disclaim his personal adaptation of the original Latin that is inevitable in translation. He reveals to his readers that the translations were "written at a very early time of life, when solitude left the mind at liberty to pursue, without any fixed design, such amusements as gratified the present hour" (x).

In his own voice he describes the inspirations that led to the translations and by extension to the volume as a whole. In an apologetic tone he ends the preface with a sort of dedication to his first patron, Francis Garden. The invocation from Lucretius "was written at the particular desire of a Friend, whose commands the Translator hath reason to honour" (x). The preface illustrates Beattie's desire to introduce himself as a serious and conscientious poet. The poems in this volume deal with political and social tensions that are relevant to writings of the eighteenth century generally. The conflicts between the establishment and opposition concerning the conduct of the Seven Years' War, as well as the government's domestic policy, present an interesting context for the "Ode to Peace" and "Ode to Hope." "Retirement, an Ode" and "The Triumph of Melancholy" question the implications of solitude upon the mind and its creations, while also exploring the necessity of generally negative emotions such as melancholy to the process of poetic creation.

³³ Lipking, 16.

These two poems highlight the status of melancholy as an affliction with particular benefits, and Beattie's desire to explore its implications within the context of contemporary conceptions. Indeed, melancholy: "for most of the century, [is] shadowed by images of the pleasures and privileges that might come with such supposed afflictions. The pleasures and privileges are typically associated with kinds of retreat, variously rendered as evidence of 'Indolence' or of 'Sensibility', from worldly ambition and commercial activity."³⁴ The memorial poems in the volume deal with the mental process of mourning, and the effectiveness of Christianity as consolation for grief and bereavement in both public and private situations. The fable and song, like the earlier odes, make veiled critical comments upon eighteenth century society and its values.

The translations initially seem out of place, but they highlight Beattie's desire to situate himself within the tradition of Warton, Dryden, and Pope. The classical authors Beattie chose to translate present poignant political and social criticisms in the tradition of his predecessors. The Eclogues focus on the differences and similarities between an Arcadian world and reality; while the other translations reveal Beattie's early engagement with philosophical poetry, and the relationship between the two disciplines. Together, the poems present to the world Beattie's varied poetic interests.

³⁴ John Mullan, Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 215.

The Odes

Throughout the odes there are verbal echoes of, and formal stylistic similarities to, the Pindaric odes of Thomas Gray. Gray would continue to be an important influence on Beattie's poetry throughout his career. He presented a modern model to Beattie of how an ancient structure can be updated and transformed into a new vehicle for poetic expression. Beattie also took from Gray the use of obscurity, an unknown narrator and subject, to focus attention on the lines rather than the speaker, and as the poem develops the surface setting is overshadowed by the overarching mental process. "Ode to Peace" and "Ode to Hope" (both written in 1758) are poetic responses to the disastrous opening of the Seven Years' War. From the first, Beattie attempts to utilise poetry for an instructive purpose, and here it is a means of criticism of contemporary politics and morals. The regime change occurred "In 1755-6, failure to deal the French navy a decisive blow in the Atlantic, and the loss of Minorca in the Mediterranean...left the old Whig regime discredited if not devastated."³⁵

Out of this frustration with the government's handling of events abroad, the Pitt-Newcastle ministry grew. The Commons at this time was divided over strategies and priorities concerning the war. The loss of Minorca and Fort William Henry renewed anti-war sentiments among the wider population, while the Convention of the Kloster Zeven forced the demobilisation of the Hanoverian army, which led to controversy over further British involvement in the region.³⁶ Disagreements on foreign and domestic policy in the period created intense public debate and general social unrest. Within this climate of political and social discord Beattie presents his concerns and opinions about current events.

³⁵ Paul Langford and Christopher Harvie, The Oxford History of Britain: The Eighteenth Century and the Age of Industry, ed. Kenneth O. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) 52.

³⁶ Daniel Marston, Essential Histories: The Seven Years' War (Oxford: Osprey, 2001) 33, 37.

The conventions of this genre make it an ideal form for Beattie's social and political criticism. The Pindaric "was basically a formal, public or social poem, usually occasional, celebrating something."³⁷ The "Ode to Peace" is a Pindaric in structure, but does not follow Pindar in subject. Pindar's odes were to celebrate the triumphs of a great athlete, and were meant to be sung and danced at the festival honouring the sportsman's achievement. They were public displays of triumph and celebration, recounting past glories and giving thanks to the Gods for present ones. In the Pindaric tradition "The ode regularly has a brilliant opening, often an image, or a piece of gnomic wisdom, sometimes a prayer or an invocation"³⁸ and Beattie's odes are no exception.

Beattie's ode opens with a prayer to Peace, the "heaven-descended maid" (1) whose character and function in the mortal world are central to the poem. In the golden age before man's wars every angel "To loftiest raptures tuned the heavenly lyre, / Pour'd in loud symphony th' impetuous strain; / And every fiery orb and planet sung" (8-10). Beattie revises line 8 to "Striking through all their ranks th' eternal lyre" (8) in the 1766 version, so that the imagery of the line is changed from preparation to action, the performance of music by the angels creating a sense of immediacy. The use of 'eternal' rather than 'heavenly,' also is a significant change; it reinforces the unchanging character of the song instead of simply suggesting an angelic, or other-worldly quality. The music of these angels also hints at the existence of a heavenly equivalent to pre-lapsarian Eden. This ode depicts the vices of mankind that banish Peace from the world, and the devastation humanity causes because of ambition, hatred, and revenge. It chastises the leaders whose policies have led to war, as well as those whose overriding desire for wealth and ambition has clouded their proper judgement.

³⁷ Carol Maddison, *Apollo and the Nine: A History of the Ode* (London: Routledge, 1960) 3.

³⁸ Maddison, 8.

The beauty of the first strophe contrasts with the rising terror in the second: "Murder deep-rous'd, with the wild whirlwind's haste / And roar of tempest, from her cavern springs, / Her tangled serpents girds around her waist, / Smiles ghastly-stern, and shakes her gore-distilling wings" (21-24). The already imagined sweep of death is able to silence the natural forces: "The mighty ocean's more majestic voice / Drown'd in superiour din is heard no more; / The surge in silence sweeps along the foamy shore" (34-36). Beattie has gone to the negative end of the sublime in the second stanza. The stage is now set for humans to enter the scene and with them come vices, which separate humanity from the virtues of the divine.

Now "The mingling multitudes, the madding car / Pouring impetuous on the plain below, / War's dreadful Lord proclaim" (39-41). Alliteration pervades the introduction of war, giving it quickness and preserving intensity of the poem. These lines echo Gray's "Elegy": "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife" (73). The images of man's futile attempts to conquer nature are reinforced by disturbing images. Man is separated from the beauty of heaven by his embrace of vices such as hate, war, and revenge: "The chearful face of heaven no more is seen, / Fades the Morn's vivid blush to deadly pale, / The bat flits transient o'er the dusky green" (45-47). The actions of men alienate them from nature, which Beattie will argue that nature is in fact the physical manifestation of the divine, and so the disconnection from nature subsequently separates them from God.

The characterisation of nature is ambiguous, and requires the reader to infer more of the character than Beattie seems to have deemed appropriate. He thus changes the image of morning in the 1766 version, making it less ambiguous and more thematically active: "The bloom of morning fades to deadly pale" (46). Morning is here personified as a blooming flower; the loss of its beauty and colour reinforce the connection he is making between the actions of man and its effects on the world around him.

At the end of the epode, there is a powerful invocation of ambition which the poem labels as the most destructive of human failings: “Disparting from behind the clouds disclose / Of kingly gesture a gigantic form, / That with his scourge sublime directs the whirling storm” (70-72). Ambition is the notorious vice that sets mankind on the path to destruction of the natural world and his own conscience, because its result is luxury, greed, and ultimately despair. The ambitious nature of British imperial expansion in India and North America made the material luxuries criticised in this passage readily available to the developing consumer society.

John Brown, in his virtually contemporary study, Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times (1757-58) blamed the nation’s obsession with luxury for “the decline of education, music, and painting and in the omnipresence of personal vanity, dandyism, gluttony, gambling, [and] avarice”³⁹ among the population. The introduction of Ambition to the poem foreshadows the eventual discord between man and nature. The world “Where late the shepherd told his tender tale; / And wak’d by the soft-murmuring breeze of morn / The voice of cheerful Labour fill’d the dale” (81-83) will be destroyed by this impending force. The images harken back to classical images of rural poets in an environment of peace and harmony between man and nature. The third epode continues to develop the characteristics of peace. The scenes that fly before the speaker are as dreams: they are the universal memory of peace before man chose knowledge, which forever changed the world. These dreams of a less corrupted world are transient, and their exit is depicted as a kind of ghastly exorcism: “But ah! the landscape glows with fainter light, / It darkens, swims, and flies for ever from my sight” (107-8).

³⁹ David Spadafora, The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990) 215.

The diction of the passage is chilling; the world is seen to be turning away from the light of virtue, and physical actions present the narrator's thoughts on the world's lost perfection.

The final section of the poem highlights the inherent conflict between peace and ambition, the other vices previously cited:

But ah! the landscape glows with fainter light,
It darkens, swims, and flies for ever from my sight.

IV.i

Illusions vain! Can sacred PEACE reside,
Where sordid gold the breast alarms,
Where cruelty inflames the eye of Pride,
And Grandeur wantons in soft Pleasure's arms! (107-12)

Ambition pushes mankind toward vices and destruction; it eclipses the beauty of nature and replaces it with images of material luxury and wealth. The sublime in this passage is a positive force in the mind, though the images of sublimity evoked earlier impress more negative notions upon the imagination. Beattie uses the power of the sublime to impress horrible images upon the reader in order to illuminate the consequences of an indulgence in ambition. It draws attention to the "true" state of affairs in the world, rather than cloaking them in shadows. Beattie will later question the value of this power of the sublime, and explore its destructive consequences.⁴⁰

The poem cites material wealth, physical pleasure, and ambition for pensions and appointments as the vices keeping peace from Britain's shores. In the 1766 version Beattie replaces the final "!" with "?"; the lines are suited to this change, because the question mark reinforces the didacticism while not forcing a resolution.

⁴⁰ This is one of the important arguments made in *The Minstrel*. See pp. 113-14.

The uncertainty in the speaker's mind, is expressed by the change in punctuation. The numerous vices of the poem are encapsulated in ambition: "Ambition! These are thine: / These from the soul erase the form divine; / These quench the animating fire" (113-15). Ambition pushes mankind toward vices and destruction; it eclipses the beauty of nature and replaces it with temporal pleasures and preoccupations, that are ultimately frivolous. The obsessions of the ruling elite with French luxuries became a point of popular conflict as the war raged without any decisive victories.⁴¹ Britain is estranged from peace by its own actions, through the drive for power and material wealth. The poem's didacticism is motivated by moralistic ideals against the lust for luxury through violent means.

Peace is personified as a melancholy maid, whose compassion for humanity is palpable: "grief dim'd her radiant eyes, / Her swelling bosom heav'd with boding sighs" (137-38). The final two lines of the poem depict her setting off without hope: "She saw; and, on refulgent pinions born, / Slow wing'd her way sublime, and mingled with the morn" (143-44). There is no resolution of the conflict the poem has chronicled between mankind and the better and worse angels of his nature. The poem makes a political statement through contrasting the imagery of rural shepherds and poetic angels with the destruction and torment caused by man's aspirations to material wealth, which is encapsulated in the Seven Years' War.

The poem also makes a cultural critique, addressing the role of poetry in society and the poet's motivations. The poem reaches back to a golden age of poetry, before profit and ambition motivated the pen. The damning of ambition, however, is problematic for Beattie, because he is aware of the necessity of a readership and the imperative to instruct and delight.

⁴¹ W. A. Speck, Literature and Society in Eighteenth-Century England 1680-1820: Ideology, Politics, and Culture (London: Longman, 1998) paraphrased from 95.

He wishes to characterise himself as a natural poet, but he must also court public favour if he is to be known. From the start, ambition is at odds with his poetic character. These conflicting forces are not resolved in the poem, but are revived later in his career.⁴² The poem argues that peace is thwarted by the actions of greed and mass consumption, but is inevitably the only solution to the struggle.

In "Retirement, an Ode," Beattie projects his own growing poetic character. Perhaps it is the autobiographical nature of the poem that prompts him to include it in his final volume of poetry.⁴³ In a letter he writes in middle age to Mrs. Montagu, Beattie describes his youthful beliefs concerning solitude and its effect on the mind. "In my younger days, I was much attached to solitude, and could have envied even 'The shepherd of the Hebride isles, placed far amid the melancholy main.' I wrote Odes to Retirement; and wished to be conducted to its deepest groves, remote from every rude sound, and from every vagrant foot. In a word, I thought the most profound solitude the best."⁴⁴ His ideas concerning melancholy, the sublime, and solitude will change over the course of his life, but in "Retirement," solitude is a positive force, because it allows the mind to commune with the natural world. Young Beattie explores the implications of solitude upon the poetic imagination, but does not resolve any of the complications with regard to poetry and the progression of the career of the poet through life.

The opening of the poem introduces the speaker as a votary of nature. The speaker shifts early on to a swain similar to the character of Edwin: "Beside a plaintive stream, / A meek-eyed Youth of serious mein, / Indulged this solemn theme" (6-8).⁴⁵ The young poet is situated amongst sylvan scenes that will inspire his imagination. The youth wanders: "By

⁴² See Chapter 3. The Hermit in *The Minstrel* and his relationship to Edwin revive the issue in interesting ways.

⁴³ Beattie's final volume of poetry, *The Minstrel, in Two Books: with Some other Poems* (1784) includes only "Retirement," "Elegy," "Ode to Hope" and "The Hares," from *OPT*.

⁴⁴ W. Forbes, 1:288.

⁴⁵ These lines are altered in 1776: "Beside a lulling stream, / A pensive Youth of placid mien, / Indulged this tender theme."

wilder'd Fancy led, / What time the wan moon's yellow rays / Stream through the chequer'd shade" (14-16).⁴⁶ This passage seems to depict Beattie's own youthful wanderings in Fordoun; the fancy rather than reasoning lead the poet through this enchanting landscape.

The poem tracks the development of his poetic imagination amidst the wild scenes of this neighbourhood. Beattie's swain retreats from human desires by seeking refuge in this protected grove. This is a crucial movement, because it is the swain's invocation of nature as his protector against the material world that gives the reader a glimpse into his character and his relationship with the world around him:

Scap'd the tumultuous world's alarms
To your retreats I fly.
Deep in your most sequester'd bower
Let me at last recline,
Where Solitude, meek modest Power,
Leans on her ivy'd shrine. (19-24)

For the swain, solitude in nature evokes a protection against the tumultuous human world depicted in the "Ode to Peace." He supplicates before the altar of nature, pleading for peace and the positive consequences of such contemplative and serene scenery. Solitude is personified as an unattainable lady: "How shall I woo thee, matchless Fair! / Thy envy'd smile how win!" (25-26). His prayer to nature has not yet yielded him the benefits he believes solitude should; nature has not proved to be the wholly fulfilling entity he believes it is in the opening of the poem.

⁴⁶ This line changes in 1776: "And Woe retires to weep, / What time the wan moon's yellow horn / Gleams on the western deep."

This signals a shift in the poem from an unrealistic degree of optimism to a more pragmatic depiction of solitude and the relationship between the poet and nature. The poet makes an almost desperate appeal: "Let no rude sound invade from far, / No vagrant foot be nigh," (37-38) to disturb his solitude, which he hopes will bring him closer to nature. The revisions of 1766 insert a new passage of reminiscence, distancing the speaker from the youthful swain of the poem. This new passage is marked by a regretful tone:

Blest days! when Fancy smiled at care,
When Pleasure toy'd with truth,
Nor Envy with malignant glare
Had harm'd his simple youth. (37-40)

The speaker is recalling those earlier days of solitude, when worldly aspirations had not yet infected the youthful poet's psyche. The revision in 1766 presents an interesting shift in Beattie's self-presentation. The practical demands of his life at this time (he married in June of 1767), as well as his personal desire of success have taken precedence over his idealism. This is an important change, because the speaker's optimism for the swain's future seems to be lacking; it could reflect the decline of his own poetic ambition in the wake of his appointment to the Chair at Aberdeen, and the duties which the post entailed.

The speaker then prostrates himself to the lady Solitude by denying any interest in worldly acclaim, with the hope that nature will once again work upon his imagination: "For me, no more the path invites / Ambition loves to tread; / No more I climb life's panting heights" (41-43). This youthful poet has been replaced by a worldlier one, who recalls the futility of ambition. From the outset Beattie must strive to reconcile his desire for fame with the qualities expected of a poetical genius. The poem argues for a life of solitude and disconnection from the human world, while looking to nature for comfort and inspiration.

But Beattie's bids for patronage complicate the development of himself as a natural poet. Again ambition is labelled as a vice rather than a virtue of humanity, but it is one that had a profound impact on Beattie's career. The final lines reinforce the youth's insecurities concerning the positive power of nature, because it is in sharp contrast to the inevitable decay of human life, which becomes the poem's focal point.

The poem ends in a melancholy and brooding tone: "To Joy's enlivening lays— / Soon are the glittering moments o'er, / Soon each gay form decays" (46-48). The lays that once stirred his heart are as impermanent as his body; they will grow and decay into obscurity. This impermanence is taunted by the cycles of nature; though the solitary poet rejoices in nature and the comfort he finds in it, he cannot truly become a part of it until death decays his body. Similarly, the speaker's presentation of himself in the poem as a creature of solitude is complicated by Beattie's obvious desire for patronage and acceptance as a professional poet.

For Beattie, this solitary communion in nature is rooted in the connection between man and God, which is introduced in the "Ode to Peace." Though nature provides temporary relief from human pain because it reflects the benevolence of the divine, and awakens the mind with divine inspiration, dwelling too long in solitary places leads to the indulgence of melancholy emotions, which stimulate the imagination, but also distract from day-to-day human duties and society. This complex relationship between the poet and nature illustrates the inevitable futility of Beattie's desire for worldly success as a poet. As his career grows he concludes that a solitary life and poetic ambition cannot flourish in one person. This negative yet necessary relationship complicates Beattie's desire for poetical fame.

The revised version of the poem in 1766 contains four new stanzas, with lines 41-48 revised and inserted as the new conclusion. The new stanzas focus on the poet/speaker, and are characterised by reminiscences of his youthful solitary experiences in nature. The solitude that opened nature up to him has been eclipsed by worldly concerns and a desire for wealth and comfort. The speaker recalls his conscious abandonment of that natural neighbourhood in favour of more material pleasures: "Why did fate his steps decoy / In stormy paths to roam, / Remote from all congenial joy!" (45-47) far from the retreats of the natural world that once inspired his poetry. The speaker makes a desperate supplication to reclaim those lost days: "Henceforth thy awful haunts be mine! / The long-abandoned hill; / The hollow cliff, whose waving pine / O'erhangs the darksome rill" (49-51).

Now removed from these scenes by duty and responsibility, the poet longs for the natural sublimity that once sparked the poetic imagination and animated his soul. In the next stanza he longs to remove himself again: "Let no rude sound invade from far, / No vagrant foot be nigh" (60-61). These lines appear to be spoken in vain, because the poet is caught within society and can find no respite in nature. The poem shifts focus to those solitary experiences in nature: "Thy hallow'd bowers explore, / O guard from harm his hoary head, / And listen to his lore" (65-67). The revisions add a kind of resignation and melancholy alien to the original version. The speaker becomes a poet whose experiences have taken him away from nature, and through that separation he has learned its importance to his creative imagination. The next stanza of the poem is the revised from lines 41-44 in 1760 version.⁴⁷ Their inclusion here reinforces the futility of a poetic career fuelled by worldly ambition rather than natural inspiration.

⁴⁷ "For me no more the path invites / Ambition loves to tread; / No more I climb those toilsome heights, / By guileful hope misled" (81-84).

The last line is where the sentiment diverges most obviously from the earlier text. Instead of "Soon each gay form decays" (48), the poem ends, "All the past is vain" (79). This change is significant to the thematic development of the poem; the former focuses on the inevitable end of the physical existence, while the revision declares actions before death as vanity, since they are ultimately impermanent. The poem's revised tone is bitter rather than optimistic, emerging perhaps from Beattie's experiences as a poet.

"Ode to Hope" is the second Pindaric, though the third ode in the volume, and deals with similar themes of mutability and inevitable pain. The opening situates the speaker in an awful landscape. "Left all night long to mourn / Amidst the horrors of the dreary waste" (3-4), we find the speaker dejected and ill. The entrance of Hope puts to flight the vices that plague the speaker. They look upon Hope and "Appal'd retire: Suspicion hides her head" (17) and "With haste unwonted Indolence upsprings, / And heaving lifts her leaden wings, / And sullen glides away" (22-24). These images impress harshness and illustrate the power of Hope to conquer Indolence and Vice. The diction of these flights builds in intensity to reinforce both the evilness of the Vices and Hope's goodness.

Hope is personified as a mother whose duty is to instruct the youthful poet, and free the mind from the pitfalls of the earlier stanza. Hope invites the poet to explore nature, and "Fond he surveys thy mild maternal face, / His bashful eye still kindling as he views" (45-46). Hope is complicated, because it can be negative as well as positive: it teaches the poet to strive for the images of the imagination, but though it can inspire peace and "Bring Love along and Harmony, / Tomorrow the gay scene deforms; / Then all around, the thunder's sound" (68-70), it can be negative because it blinds mankind to their frailty and inevitable death.

If Hope enables the poet to attain glory, it cannot stop his eventual death, and so the victory is fleeting: "For now Youth's eminence he gains, / But what a weary length of lingering woe remains!" (79-80). While his youth brings him pleasure and success, the eventual aging and decay of his body is constantly on his mind. Humanity's vices are introduced in the third strophe to destroy the hope inspired by the scenery. Virtue is invoked to save the youth from the destruction wrought by the vices but it cannot defeat them, "And onward rolls the war" (104). The final stanza reinforces the importance of Hope as the antidote to these vices: "HOPE bursts all radiant on the sight: / Her words the troubled bosom soothe" (108-9). Though Hope can be damaging because it disguises mutability, it also gives hope of an afterlife. Hope speaks the final words of the poem, which express hope for the heaven promised by Christianity: "Dreams of heaven's opening glories I impart, / Till the free'd spirit springs on high / In rapture too severe for weak Mortality" (118-20). And so hope is generally a positive force when coupled with a Christian doctrine, and its negative consequences marked in the poem are not resolved. Beattie further explores the power of hope and the negative consequences of it in "The Triumph of Melancholy."

"The Triumph of Melancholy" explores the negative forces at work within the poet's mind, which complicate his own prosperity and happiness, but inspire his poetry. Natural scenes connect the intellectual landscape with the physical. The poem's verse is the elegiac verse form used by Gray in his "Elegy," which "contributes to the elusive sense of half-personal emotionalism characteristic of the transition verse of mid-century."⁴⁸ The poem deals with many themes: ambition, the inevitable human death, isolation from society, and the influence of solitude and melancholy emotion inspired by the natural world.

⁴⁸ Eleanor Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist: Moods and Themes of Melancholy from Gray to Keats* (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1932) 295.

Through the poem Beattie recognises the necessity for melancholy in some degree as a propellant of poetic creation, and recalls his own intellectual experience. Negative as well as positive emotions and experiences are necessary for a poet to truly represent the natural world in its duality.⁴⁹ The familiar subject of the poem is a youthful swain, whose meditations will occupy the body of the argument. The speaker introduces his swain into a fantastical landscape “Deckt gorgeous by the lavish hand of Spring” (6). In this valley the youthful poet “tempers sweet his sprightly-warbling lay” (12). This poetic solitude is invaded by reality to “distract that placid mien” (15) from its poetic occupation. His musings are in vain, for “Yonder she comes! The heart-enflaming fiend!” (18). Passion enflames the mind rather than melancholy, and so this is a passive rather than active emotion upon the mind. This opening contrasts Thomas Warton’s “Pleasures of Melancholy,”⁵⁰ in which melancholy is an animating force upon the imagination, bringing gloom: “Congenial with my soul; to chearless shades, / To ruin’d seats, to twilight cells and bowers, / Where thoughtful Melancholy loves to muse” (18-20). Though Beattie’s poet is also placed amongst this sublime scenery, the effect of melancholy on the mind he diverges from his model.

For Warton, melancholy acts as a catalyst for creative expression, but Beattie portrays it as double-edged sword, inspiring the imagination but hindering the development of other aspects of the mind. Melancholy’s effect upon the mind of the poet is disturbing: “Pain with strong grasp distorts his writing limbs, / And Fear’s cold hand erects his bristling hair!” (27-28). Beattie depicts through striking physical imagery the inward torture of melancholy upon the mind.

⁴⁹ This negative impact of nature upon the mind is further explored in “The Hermit.” See pp. 224-26.

⁵⁰ Thomas Warton, *The Three Wartons: A Choice of Their Verse* Ed. Eric Partridge (London: Scholartis, 1927) 101.

The poet/speaker retreats into nature for solace and protection, from this melancholy state: "Here Health has oft in blushing beauty glow'd, / While loose-robed Quiet stood enamour'd by" (47-48). The revisions of 1766 alter "oft in blushing beauty glow'd" to "rosy bloom has often glow'd" (47). The diction alters the subject of the image from an anthropomorphic one to a natural one; it reinforces the connection Beattie is making between serenity and the natural world. The revised line suggests Gray's "Ode to Spring": "Lo, Where the rosy-bosom'd Hours, / Fair Venus' train appear" (1-2). Changing the diction removes any tendency by readers to relate the beauty to humanity rather than nature. The inability of nature to soothe the pain of death separates it from humanity: "Say, can ye chear pale Sickness' gloomy bed, / Or dry the tears that bathe the untimely urn?" (67-68). The melancholy inspired by death and sickness is not soothed by communion with nature. For Warton, melancholy also opens the mind to question the purpose of human actions: "This fleeting state of things, the vain delights, / The fruitless toils, that still our search elude, / As through the wilderness of life we rove" (80-82). The beauty and health of nature does not forever please the poet because it emphasizes by contrast his inevitable decay. The poet questions the use of poetry in the light of humanity's inevitable death and pays obvious tribute to his patron:

But hopest thou, Muse, vainglorious as thou art,
 With the weak impulse of thy humble strain,
 Hopest thou to soften Pride's obdurate heart,
 When ERROLL's bright example shines in vain? (85-88).

These lines are completely altered for the 1766 version of the poem,⁵¹ but they retain the sentiments of the original. In the later version these lines are not questions but statements;

⁵¹ "But hope not, Muse, vainglorious as thou art, / With the weak impulse of thy humble strain, / Hope not to soften Pride's obdurate heart, / When ERROLL's bright example shines in vain" (81-84).

which relieves some of the ambiguity of the earlier version. Clearly the praise of Erroll is done in Beattie's voice, and so the identity of the poet/speaker is transparently identified with the poet himself.

The poem then shifts to more universal questions concerning the ultimate purpose of human ambition and the use of virtues. Beattie invokes the muse of history to "swell to thought sublime th' exalted soul" (96). With the recounting of history comes a battle between Liberty and Ambition, but the cause of virtue cannot be won for man. It is "Not Virtue's self, when Heaven its aid denies, / Can brace the loosen'd nerves, or warm the heart" (125-26). Beattie is recalling Gray's "On a Distant Prospect of Eton College," which makes a similar comment on the state of humanity. Beattie echoes specifically Gray's presentation of man's universal condemnation in melancholic terms: "To each his suff'rings: all are men, / Condemn'd alike to groan" (91-92). To prove the ultimate futility of hope against human suffering the poem shifts to an impressive description of the death of Brutus. Virtue is personified as a Goddess whose mourning of Brutus is depicted with emotionally evocative imagery: "From her dishevel'd locks she rends the plume; / No lustre lightens in her weeping eyes, / And on her tear-stain'd cheek no roses bloom" (142-44). As a result of the demise of virtue's final champion, "Meanwhile the world, Ambition owns thy sway, / Fame's loudest trumpet labours in thy praise" (145-46). The poem points to this ancient death as the sign of the decay of virtue.

The imagination is now a servant of ambition rather than virtue, because the products of the imagination are used to gain success. For the poet solitude is the final refuge, because it is also the refuge of virtue. The poet recognises that “Full oft, where Solitude and Silence dwell / Far far remote amid the lowly plain, / Resounds the voice of Woe from Virtue’s cell” (153-55). Virtue is depicted as an unattainable entity amidst the human world of corruption; the morally unpolluted world can only be approached through supplication to nature. The poet indulges in melancholy in an effort to reclaim his creativity: “How vainly have I strove / Thy power, O melancholy, to withstand! / Tir’d I submit; but yet, O yet remove / Or ease the pressure of thy heavy hand” (157-60).

Even at the moment of submission, the poet still pleads to be released from the affliction of melancholy. His poetic endeavours to combat melancholy are characterised as selfish rather than selfless actions. Melancholy is characterised as an essential part of the creative imagination, whose banishment by the poet is fleeting. The consequences of the poet’s dissent from melancholy bring the poem back to the question of human mutability and the place of poetry within our limited life. The speaker wonders whether poetry can rescue man from his fate: “Or on the withering limbs fresh beauty shed, / Or soothe the sad INEVITABLE HOUR, / Or cheer the dark dark mansions of the dead?” (194-96). The diction is borrowed from Gray’s “Elegy”: “And all that beauty, all that wealth e’er gave, / Awaits alike th’inevitable hour, / The paths of glory lead but to the grave” (34-36). The temporal rewards of an indulgence in melancholy are insignificant in comparison to the reality of death and its ultimate equality.

The melancholy in the poet's mind enables him to investigate the limitations of his actions. He hopes his poetry will continue after death and so he will live on through his works, but there is an underlining sense in the poem that he will inevitably be forgotten. For Beattie, poetry inspires his soul and the souls of others to sublime and awesome emotions, but it cannot protect mankind from the transitory nature of life. Having settled on this conclusion, the poem shifts from his specific fate to the universal. The traveller of the final stanza is a metaphor for the poet. He takes on a universal character, as one "Wilder'd and weary sits him down at last; / For long the night, and distant far his home" (215-16).

The journey of the traveller becomes a metaphor for the conflict between the poet and his desire to indulge the melancholy he knows will make him incapable of continuing social concerns. This metaphor of the melancholic traveller is reminiscent of Mark Akenside's "Hymn to Cheerfulness" (1745). Akenside argues that melancholy is a negative force because it separates the poet from his peers.⁵² For Akenside, the solitude of a poet who "Retires in desert scenes to dwell, / And bids the joyless world farewell" (109-10) is in vain. Akenside's speaker inevitably continues, and "asks a clue for nature's ways, / But evil haunts him through the maze" (119-20). The evil brought on by this solitude is melancholy, which for Akenside can be dissolved by Cheerfulness. It is an emotion which "founds on discord beauty's reign, / Converts to pleasure every pain, / Subdues each hostile form to rest" (135-37).

The argument of "The Triumph of Melancholy" is more akin to Milton's in "Il Penseroso." Milton portrays melancholy as a negative, yet necessary influence upon the mind and heart. It is melancholy that brings the speaker to a place of peace and solitude: "Till old experience do attain / To something like Prophetic strain / These pleasures Melancholy give, / And I with thee will choose to live" (173-76).

⁵² In "Verses Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. Charles Churchill" Beattie puts Akenside in the company of Milton, Shakespeare, and Spenser: "Is this the land, where AKENSIDE displays / The bold, yet temp'rate flame of antient days?" (41-42).

Like Milton's speaker, Beattie brings his traveller to rest amidst the solitude of nature, where melancholy will continue to influence his imagination. Beattie's poem ends without a clear resolution in favour of melancholy (Milton), or a firm stance against it as self-indulgence (Akenside). Instead, the poem finishes with a romantic sense of hope and faith in the continuing struggle of man, without reconciling any of the opposing thoughts present in the poem.

Memorial Poems

The mental process of mourning and the divided emotions of those left on earth are at the centre of these four poems. The opening poem in this series, "An Elegy, Occasioned by the Death of a Lady," depicts virtue as a human attribute rather than as a gift from the divine. It offers a meditation on death in terms of its impact on the living, and its finality. Hope in all its forms is depicted as deceptive; defeating death today simply defers "th' inevitable hour." "Epitaph on *****" was written in his youth and intended for himself, making these abstract meditations more poignant and personal. To reinforce the importance of his eventual poetic legacy he includes "Epitaph" which was written for the grave of two drowned brothers; to show his reputation as a poet and his power to immortalise the dead. It also explores the emotions that impending death brought to the two tragic figures. "Elegy" complicates the uses of the imagination, and the relationship of sleep and death.

“An Elegy” was composed in honour of Elizabeth Burnet, a sister of James Burnet (later Lord Monboddo). Her family lived in the parish of Fordoun and would have known Beattie through his position as church precentor. The poem is a public celebration of the lady’s life, and a depiction of the mourning of family and friends. It also supports the notion of Beattie’s self-awareness in his volume; he intends to prove his importance as a poet through his verse. He pays tribute to an influential family in his parish by immortalising one of their members in verse, which was originally printed and circulated amongst the family and their friends.⁵³ The poem teaches us how to mourn, and to celebrate the life of the loved one lost, by depicting the mental process of grief and mourning, and ways to grieve.

The death of Elizabeth Burnet is the occasion of the poem, which “provides a satisfyingly opaque grounding for the mental event which it occasions, that mental event becomes the focus of the poem, until at last the mental event becomes itself the ground of the poem.”⁵⁴ This is clear throughout the development of the poem from specific to more universal didacticism. The speaker entreats us to be forever prepared for death, “Lest, like the lightning’s glance, the sudden ill / Flash to confound, and penetrate to kill” (15-16). Death is an altering event for anyone connected with it, as it inevitably evokes complicated emotions and forces changes.

The speaker then praises Burnet by reinforcing her intellectual as well as physical beauty. She was “Wise! Beauteous! Good!— O every grace combin’d / That charms the eye, that captivates the mind!” (21-22). These beauties of soul and appearance now only live in the memories of others. Her physical and spiritual attributes are now ideas to be conjured by the imagination: “Since still to Fancy’s eyes / I see I see the lov’d Idea rise, / Still let me gaze, and every care beguile” (31-33). The memories of the dead in the mourner’s mind

⁵³ A version of this poem entitled “An Elegy, Occasioned by the Death of Mrs. Walker” and signed February 1759, survives in a bound volume with three other poems. (NLS RB.S.1611.4)

⁵⁴ Dolan, 123.

eclipse all other mental pictures, and so the mourner becomes consumed by the need to recreate these scenes in the mind. Such thoughts are expressed in an important rhetorical question in the poem. The speaker wonders at the indiscriminate nature of death: “Why spare the weed, and lop the lovely flower! / Why fly thy shafts in lawless error drivin?” (70-71) in despair. These questions become overwhelming since there can be no answer, and so the poem shifts to the immortal soul’s freedom through death. The Christian belief in an afterlife is the only consolation offered to those in mourning. Death is the liberator of the spirit because it frees the soul from corporeal cares:

O happy stroke, that breaks the bonds of clay,
Darts through the bursting gloom the blaze of day,
And wings the soul with boundless flight to soar,
Where dangers threat, and fears alarm, no more (85-88).

This sentiment was a commonplace of Christian doctrine, as evidenced by Samuel Johnson’s “On the Death of Dr. Robert Levet” (1783). When describing the death of his friend the comfort of the Christian afterlife becomes clear: in Levet’s case “Death broke at once the vital chain, / And free’d his soul the nearest way” (34-36). Though Johnson suggests that Levet did not suffer, Beattie is concerned with the release from physical pain that comes with death, and in the final stanza Beattie addresses the futile nature of mourning and sorrow. The mourners: “in speechless, hopeless anguish, bend / O’er her loved dust, the Parent, Brother, Friend! / Vain hope of mortal man!—But cease thy strain” (93-95). The mourners experience intense dual emotions: happiness that comes from belief in Christian immortality and sorrow for their own personal loss. Though the speaker urges those mourning to take comfort in the promise of their own lives, the reader becomes united with the imagined mourners, and “Mix’d with yon drooping Mourners, o’er her bier / In silence shed the sympathetic tear”

(97-98). The poem deals with the effectiveness of Christian consolation for those left to weep and mourn, which will remain a theme of Beattie's elegiac poems throughout his career.

"An Epitaph on *****" is a public display of Beattie's own juvenile thoughts on his personal mortality and poetic legacy. It was first published in the Scots Magazine in 1757 with the title "An Epitaph. Designed for its Author" and signed K-d-esh-e, Moriturus. The signature is no doubt an abbreviation of Kincardineshire, and is further evidence that Beattie signed the poem only semi-anonymously. The shift in self-presentation between the magazine publication and the revised version is interesting.

The title change provides Beattie with a degree of anonymity, but he makes no pretence that the subject is not himself. Beattie's nephew-in-law, George Glennie, recalls he had heard the poem "repeated in conversation, as an Epitaph designed by Dr. Beattie for himself."⁵⁵ At the beginning of his career as a poet, and throughout his later life, the future of his poetic reputation is important to Beattie, and he takes care to present himself well in the poem. It is also a poetical exploration of the melancholy related to the inevitable obscurity of poets and their work that is reminiscent of the epitaph that ends Gray's "Elegy." This epitaph is Beattie's contribution to the convention of presenting himself at the altar of public scrutiny. The poem opens with a depiction of a youthful poet who has not garnished public acclaim, and who rests safe from vain hopes of success: "Escap'd the gloom of mortal life, a soul / Here leaves its mouldering tenement of clay, / Safe, where no Cares their whelming billows roll, / No Doubts bewilder, and no Hopes betray" (1-4).

⁵⁵ George Glennie to Sir William Forbes, 4 August 1804 (NLS Acc 4796, Fettercairn Collection, Box 41).

This opening is very similar to that of Gray's epitaph: "HERE rests his head upon the
lays of Earth / A Youth to fortune and to Fame unknown, / Fair Science frown'd not on his
humble birth, / And Melancholy mark'd him for her own" (117-20). The tense of Beattie's poem shifts in the second stanza, and the reader is directly addressed by the subject. Rather than characterize himself as a poet, he first identifies himself with universal man, who "Like thee, have languish'd after empty joys; / Like thee, have labour'd in the stormy strife" (6-7). He does not reveal himself as a poet until the final stanza, which is an appeal to preserve his poetic voice. He asks readers to overlook his personal faults: "Forget my frailties, thou art also frail; / Forgive my lapses, for thyself mayst fall; / Nor read unmov'd my artless tender tale, / I was a friend, O man, to thee, to all" (13-6). This is similar to the end of Gray's "Elegy," in which the poet's virtues and vices are deemed inconsequential, since he has been reunited with God: "No farther seek his merits to disclose, / Or draw his frailties from their dread abode, / (There they alike in trembling hope repose) / The bosom of the Father and his God" (125-28). In this epitaph, Beattie is aware that "The immortality of the poet survives only so long as posterity keeps faith, and posterity is notoriously fickle."⁵⁶ He deliberately presents himself as a supplicant before his readers; begs their leniency for his poems and their themes. To reinforce his poetic reputation and notable talent, he includes an epitaph he was asked to compose for two brothers, who died tragically while crossing a local river.

"Epitaph on Two Brothers" was composed to commemorate two brothers who drowned, and were found in each other's arms.⁵⁷ It begins with a retelling of the circumstances of their death, which were well known throughout the county. The rest of the epitaph is a message to the mourner who will come and read it.

⁵⁶ Lipking, 149.

⁵⁷ "The beautiful "Epitaph on two Brothers" was written on occasion of a fatal accident which actually took place, when, in crossing the river Southesk, on horseback, in the neighbourhood of Montrose, in the county of Angus, two young men, of the name of Leitch, were carried down by the stream, and both drowned. Their bodies were afterwards found clasped in each other's arms." W. Forbes, 1:31-2.

The speaker reminds the mourner of the futility of questioning God's plan: "Heaven's hidden ways to trace, for us, how vain! / Heaven's wise decrees, how impious, to arraign!" (19-20).⁵⁸

The final two lines comfort the mourner in an artful and poignant way, if unoriginal: "They liv'd united, and united died; / Happy the friends, whom Death cannot divide!" (25-26). It is a succinct way of connecting all the arguments about death in the poem. Death cannot separate the brothers and worldly harm can no longer touch them. Before OPT went to press Beattie discovered that "They liv'd united...", "was identical with a line in a translation of Musaeus's "The Loves of Hero and Leander," which had just been published by Francis Fawkes."⁵⁹ Robinson remarks that Beattie was conscious of the possible charge of plagiarism, and changed the date of the poem's composition before its publication in OPT.⁶⁰ He clearly desired to protect his integrity as a poet, albeit by deception, while keeping an effective line of poetry he had originally composed. There is no other mention of any such deception made in his career, and his later volumes illustrate his desire to uphold his authorial integrity.

"Elegy" emphasises human mortality and the promise of eternal life. There are two conflicting ways man can deal with the grief and struggles of life. Firstly, there is the imagination: that can enable man to forget temporal problems and find pleasure in the natural world. Our unconscious imagination is active during sleep, which the poem presents as an antidote to life's torments. Sleep can "Lighten th' oppressive load which Anguish bears, / And warm with hope the cold desponding breast" (7-8). Sleep is often connected with the eternal sleep of death, and the poem speculates upon the dreams that may come: "Fancy to fairy scenes exalts to rove / Now scales the cliff gay-gleaming on the morn, / Now sad and silent treads the deepening grove" (14-16), these scenes of sublimity and beauty not known to the waking mind.

⁵⁸ This preoccupation is echoed in The Minstrel: "trace the...of the skies / be courteous and be wise" (I.449-50).

⁵⁹ Robinson, The Poetry of James Beattie: A Critical Edition PhD. Thesis University of Aberdeen, 1:164.

⁶⁰ Robinson, The Poetry of James Beattie 1:164-5. Also found in W. Forbes, 1:54.

The transitory nature of these pleasures in sleep, however highlights the problem addressed in the poem, because sleep's joys are transitory, and ultimately darkened by death:

Be taught, vain man, how fleeting all thy joys,
 Thy boasted grandeur, and thy glittering store;
 Death comes, and all thy fancy'd bliss destroys,
 Quick as a dream it fades, and is no more (33-36).

The pleasures of the imagination are transitory and fade just as human life does. Transient cares and pleasures affect mankind deeply while living, "But these shall vanish like the dreams of morn, / When Death awakes us to immortal life" (43-44). The immortal life promised in Christianity will eclipse from the human mind the pleasures of the world which are small in comparison.

Miscellaneous Poems

"The Hares, A Fable" follows after the "Elegy on a Lady" in the edition of 1760/1, which makes little thematic sense. The question of why Beattie inserted this poem between the memorial ones does not have a simple answer, but "The Hares" does continue the meditation on virtue and purpose begun in the "Elegy." The "Song: In Imitation of Shakespear's Blow, blow, thou winter wind" was inspired by William Shakespeare's song from As You Like It, set in a mythical forest which exists independently from the characters who seek shelter there. "The Hares" exemplifies the way in which morality fable in the eighteenth century became a vehicle for truth, and so the relevance of the narrative was often adapted to the moral purpose of the poem. The fable "was applied to so many new and different literary contexts as to make it clear that writers saw this as a form of 'use' in

itself.”⁶¹ This poem is an example of the genre of fable as moral allegory, which is also the motivation of the Aesopic fable Beattie made his model. The “verse fable in particular exhibits a peculiar flexibility, an ability to blend with and adapt to changing cultural surroundings.”⁶² Though the versatility of the genre is well known, Beattie’s first overt morality poem aligns itself with standard fabulist traditions. Beattie opens the poem by quoting John Gay’s “My Own Epitaph,” which situates the poem within a satirical context of morals and fables popular in his century. The plot of the fable is little changed from previous versions.

There is “a reasoned debate in a council of the hares, a hunt and then a storm which frightens them, and a suicidal intent in their flight to the lake.”⁶³ Beattie’s version of the Aesopic fable uses a linnet as something more graceful and powerful to show the hares the absurdity of their suicide mission. His opening borrows “My Own Epitaph: “Life’s a jest; and all things show it, I thought so once; but now I know it.”⁶⁴ The first line: “Life is a jest. You call it worse” (1) establishes a sardonic tone to be carried throughout the traditional sing-song verse. The poem does not immediately introduce the hares; instead it makes universal statements about the harshness of life and seeming futility of its struggle. Though “You loathe the nauseous load of life” (4), hope for the future comes disguised as a friend “With dimply cheek and smiling eyes” (10) offering to instill ambitions for a better life, whether man or hare: “Thus Hope, our smiling flattering friend, / Proves our tormentor in the end” (33-34). But the friend is false, and this is made plainer in the revised version of the poem in 1766 where line 34 is altered: “Proves false and recreant in the end” (34). It reinforces the characterisation of hope as a negative force; it is deceptive and disloyal after this revision.

⁶¹ Mark, Loveridge, *A History of Augustan Fable* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 11.

⁶² Loveridge, 5.

⁶³ Robinson, *The Poetry of James Beattie* 1:181.

⁶⁴ John Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Vinton Dearing and Charles Beckwith. 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1974) 1:253

There is marked exasperation when the speaker accepts the negative assertions made about life: “Yes, yes, I grant the sons of earth / Are doom’d to misery from their birth” (41-42). Yet despite this seeming exasperation, the speaker continues with a rhetorical question, and so the parable of the hares and linnet reinforce the universal aspects of life: “We all of sorrow have our share; / But say, Is yours beyond compare?” (43-44). The suicidal hares decide on death “Since Fate on every side prepares / For us inextricable snares” (179-80), and they no longer wish to face them. This pivotal scene is revised in 1766, with more pressing diction: “Since fate is evermore pursuing / All ways and means to work our ruin?” (177-78).

The invocation of fate is more proactive in the revised scene, and exasperation in the tone intensifies, because it seems the hares come to believe that fate manoeuvres relentlessly to work for their individual suffering. The revision evokes stronger pathos on their behalf, and makes their flight to the lake toward suicide predictable. For these weak animals death means “Our sorrows are for ever fled, / For not even dreams molest the dead” (193-94). Their resolve is tested when their presence frightens off the linnet. It is not the happiness of their life but the idea that something else lives in greater fear that animates their decision to abandon the suicide plan. Just as the linnet forgot its fear shortly after it was startled by the hares, they resolve to put their sorrow aside. And so “Discord and Care were put to flight, / And all was peace and calm delight” (327-28). The poem illustrates the universal nature of suffering and panic, as well as joy. The final poem in this section of the volume imitates a song from As You Like It which Beattie composed because his musician’s ear approved of the metre and tone.

“Song: In Imitation of Shakespear’s Blow, blow, thou winter wind &c.” follows the structure, metre, and diction of the original but omits the refrain. Beattie had reservations about the music and lyrics being used in Shakespeare’s song.⁶⁵ The song is from As You Like It, (Act II scene 7, lines 175-94) in which Orlando takes refuge with Duke Senior in the mythical forest of Arden, and the song is performed just as Orlando has been welcomed by the Duke to take rest and refreshment at his forest court. Though this poem seems to be an anomaly among the other poems in the edition, the pastoral setting and the connection between man and nature that features in the song are similar to the themes of Beattie’s pastoral translations of Virgil.

The poem opens by lamenting nature’s indifference to the plight of the speaker, who is suffering from unrequited love. The speaker begins with the element of air: “Blow, blow, thou vernal gale! / Thy balm will not avail / To ease my aching breast” (1-3) and the next stanza focuses on the inability of water: “But thou canst not compose / The tumult of my woes, / Though soft thy waters roll” (10-12). The poem then shifts to the subject of the speaker’s desire, whose beauty surpasses that of nature: Blush, blush, ye fairest flowers! / Beauties surpassing yours / My Rosalind adorn” (13-15). The speaker then implores nature to become a conspirator with him to woo his beloved, but this inevitably fails, because the final stanza shifts back to the despair of the opening:

Fade, fade, ye flowrets fair!

Gales, fan no more the air!

Ye streams forget to glide!

Be hush’d, each vernal strain!

Since nought can soothe my pain,

⁶⁵ Beattie remarks on the diction used in a new publication of the song and asks for a copy of the music as soon as possible. Beattie to Aaron Lithgow 20 March 1759. James Beattie, The Correspondence of James Beattie, ed. Roger Robinson (Bristol: Thoemmes-Routledge, 2004) 2:7.

Nor mitigate her pride (25-30).

The speaker's resignation in this final passage to the stubbornness of his beloved is depicted in terms of the physical and poetical natural world. Line 28 exemplifies the unity between poetry and nature in the speaker's mind, as he commands the natural world to cease its regular operations, since they are not assisting him in his courtship of Rosalind.

Translations

Translations were essential in the repertoire of a young man embarking upon a poetic career in the eighteenth century. Beattie's translations are a public affirmation of his abilities as a poet and his determination to follow the accepted conventions of a poetic career, though it is worth noting that the only fault cited by the reviewers was the inclusion of so much translation, where original poems would have brought more pleasure. Indeed, the reviews of the volume gave the pastorals little praise; but their criticism was generally limited to the originality of translation as a genre, rather than any specific deficiencies in the poem themselves. According to the review published in the Monthly Review, the translations, "must have taken up that time, which a writer possessed of our Author's fancy, might have better employed in composing originals."⁶⁶

The Scots Magazine was "concerned to see a genius of superior rank, employed in rendering the thoughts of others, who is capable of giving us such agreeable productions of his own."⁶⁷ The reviewers do not share Beattie's view of translation as an important building block for a poetic career. The conventional nature of translation as a genre is challenged by these reviewers, who represent the development of a new kind of criticism, one that seems to

⁶⁶ Monthly Review 24 (1761): 393-5.

⁶⁷ Scots Magazine 23 (1761): 196.

praise the invention of Beattie's own poems, but deplores translation because it is inherently an imitation. Though the reviewers thought little of these poems, they have far-reaching political implications and in some cases, illustrate the philosophies which Beattie engaged with at this early stage in his career.

Anacreon, Lucretius, Horace, and Virgil poetically express different philosophical suppositions concerning the nature of man and the universe. Beattie's engagement with these ideas through the process of translation provides his introduction to philosophical poetry, and this kind of poetry had a lasting impact on his career. The works of Anacreon focus on temporal pleasure, and are sometimes noted for explicit sexual overtones. Traditionally "Anacreon, Ode 22" was seen as an invitation from one swain to another to rest in a cosy spot, but some offer the interpretation that a more erotic meaning is meant.⁶⁸ Beattie's translation puts human pleasures at the centre of the poem. The added line: "And gales warble wild through the boughs" (7) reinforces the involvement of the senses in the experience of the natural setting.

"The Beginning of the First Book of Lucretius Translated" illustrates Beattie's early interest in philosophical poetry. De Rerum Natura is a didactic poem that promotes Epicurean philosophy utilising poetic devices. Lucretius attempts to examine the mechanisms of the natural universe to prove that mankind's preoccupations with divine powers and the fear of death are unfounded. The poem is a natural model for poets interested in poetically exploring philosophical ideas. Beattie's translation of the invocation is his first pragmatic attempt to unify these two disciplines, which is a significant moment in his intellectual development. The invocation Beattie translates is a plea to Venus for inspiration and guidance in the poem, and a supplication for peace similar to that of Beattie's "Ode to Peace."

⁶⁸ Sentence paraphrased from Robinson, The Poetry of James Beattie 1:161-62.

The dominating poetic device in the invocation “is metaphor, and this is a device which Lucretius uses to devastating effect.”⁶⁹ Venus is the goddess whose “sovereign influence guides the reins / Of Nature, and the Universe sustains; / Since nought without thee bursts the bonds of Night” (31-33). Only with the approval of the goddess can any man or beast emerge into the light of spring from the darkness of winter, as the goddess is identified with the elements of the earth’s rebirth in that season. The poet enlists the aid of the goddess so that the work will bring honour to himself and his patron. The final two lines of the invocation praise Memmius, the addressee of Lucretius. His occupation is neither philosophy nor poetry; the speaker explains, “Paternal fires his beating breast inflame, / To rescue Rome, and vindicate her name” (69-70). The end of the invocation reinforces the strength of the poet and the powers of his patron. It is a fairly free translation and illustrates Beattie’s capacity to preserve meaning while stamping it with his style.⁷⁰

Beattie translated Horace’s Book II Ode 10 after he had been rejected for a teaching post in Aberdeen.⁷¹ The odes of Horace address political tensions in Rome and at times promote philosophy of moderation. This poem celebrates moderation in lifestyle and ambition, in the wake of Beattie’s own professional setback. According to Horace “The man, whose stedfast soul can bear / Fortune indulgent or severe” (17-18) will prosper in his life. This man “With unabating courage, brave / [defies] Adversity’s tumultuous wave” (29-30) without fear. Given the messages of moderation in his other poems, it seems natural that the message of this poem would appeal to Beattie at a time when he was forced to accept a dip in his fortunes.

⁶⁹ Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, trans. R.E. Latham revised by John Godwin (London: Penguin, 1994) xxx.

⁷⁰ “for without any pain, without danger, itself mighty by its own resources, needing us not at all, it is neither propitiated with services nor touched by wrath.” Lucretius *De Rerum Natura*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse revised by Martin Ferguson Smith, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975) 7.

⁷¹ The date of composition given in the *Scots Magazine* (9 Dec 1757) supports this claim. Robinson, *The Poetry of James Beattie* 1:206.

Horace, Book III Ode 13 was prompted by a spring Beattie had seen late in 1758. The ode centres on the beauty of the fountain, and the poet's ability to immortalise it in his verse. The spring in the mind of the poet cannot be hindered by any natural elements, just as the water from the physical spring is unaltered by the heat of the sun, and so remains refreshing: "When fiery Sirius blasts the plain, / Untouch'd thy gelid streams remain" (15-16). It serves as a refreshment for nature's creatures: "the fainting flocks" (17) and the "ox with toil oppress" (19) find refuge at it. There comfort is not eternal, but the poet can immortalise the object: "Blest fountain! I devote to fame; / Thus while I sing in deathless lays" (20-21). The beauty and functions of the fountain preserved in the poet's verse defy the physical decay and destruction that inevitably will occur. The ode celebrates the poet's power over mutability, but also yields to the inevitability of death for physical beings.

The translations of Virgil's *Eclogues* are Beattie's most sustained poetic effort;⁷² and some of them address contemporary political and philosophical topics. I believe Beattie included these poems in the edition because they were the product of great labour, and because he had a strong attachment to the works of Virgil. Indeed, Robinson notes that "Beattie had a lifelong devotion to Virgil, whom he admired more than any other poet, ancient or modern."⁷³ Beattie's translations of the pastorals use the rustic scenery and language as a means to an end. For Beattie and many others in the eighteenth century the pastoral: "should reflect only the simple affairs of shepherds, that is, the loves and sorrows of a simple rural life; the fable should be simple and plain, the style neat and plain."⁷⁴ Because Beattie's translations are so close to the literal translation as presented in the Loeb Library edition, I have chosen to focus upon the first and the ninth pastoral.

⁷² The ten pastorals are 1331 lines, compared to the 1116 lines of *The Minstrel* that took Beattie eight years to produce. Paraphrased from Robinson, *The Poetry of James Beattie* 1:71.

⁷³ Robinson, *The Poetry of James Beattie* 1:71.

⁷⁴ Alexander Pope, *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism*, ed. E. Audra and Aubrey Williams, (London: Methuen) 15.

These two poems are unique among these translations, because they represent the stamp of his topical slant on the Virgilian original. The first pastoral is a dialogue between farmers, one displaced from his land and another whose lands were restored to him by a patron. The first is a dialogue; “Meliboeus here impersonates one of the unhappy exiles, and Virgil is represented under the character of Tityrus.”⁷⁵ Beattie connects the cast-out farmers with his own countrymen, who had been displaced from their land during the Highland Clearances of 1745: “In Britain some, from every comfort torn, / From all the world remov’d, are doom’d to mourn” (101-2).

The comments on the suffering brought on by dispossession must have chimed with Beattie’s views on the social and economic impact of the forced emigration and destruction which occurred in the Highlands.⁷⁶ The quiet and solitude of the farm is now gone, and the speaker laments this loss of serenity: “No more shall I, beneath the bowery shade / In rural quiet indolently laid” (115-16). Beattie believes that the ninth “and the first eclogue seem to have been written on the same occasion.”⁷⁷ Beattie’s introduction to his translation attempts to defend it against Virgil’s critics; “The Critics with one voice seem to condemn this eclogue as unworthy of its Author; I know not for what good reason.”⁷⁸ The plot is straightforward, one shepherd telling another to come and rest from his travels beside the road. It opens with a lament for their loss of land and innocent occupation: “The unexpected day at last has come, / When a rude alien drives us from our home” (3-4). This displacement is reminiscent of the barren state of the Highlands in the aftermath of Culloden, which Beattie would have heard about when young. The classical vehicle presented by Virgil allows Beattie to make a thinly veiled commentary on this contemporary situation.

⁷⁵ Beattie, *OPT* 90-91.

⁷⁶ For historical information concerning the aftermath of Culloden see Eric Richards, *A History of the Highland Clearances*, 2 vols. (London: Croom Helm, 1982-1985) 1:1-20.

⁷⁷ Beattie, *OPT* 171.

⁷⁸ Beattie, *OPT* 172.

The lays of Virgil's shepherds, like the once applauded Highland bards, are no longer valued because, "music's charms, / Amid the dreadful clang of warlike arms, / Avail no more, than the Chaonian dove" (17 -19). Within this lament for the now lost power of their lays, Virgil inserts himself as noble poet and to the patron who is the subject of the dedication. The pastoral is also about Virgil's relationship to his patron, as well Virgil's poetic powers. The speaker asks, "Who but MENALCAS could compose the lay, / Which, as we journey'd to my love's abode, / I softly sung to cheer the lonely road?" (34-36). Virgil is the absent poet being heralded in the poem. The relationship between Virgil and his patron is also discussed by the two shepherds: "Or who could finish the imperfect lays / Sung by MENALCAS to his VARUS' praise?" (41-42). Beattie's version of the poem considers whether this relationship between poet and patron can survive in a world beset with wars, displacement and constant social upheaval.

Beattie's translations of Virgil's Eclogues represent an important progression in his poetic career. The translations received a lukewarm reception from critics, and later scholars had mixed opinions concerning their merit. Sir William Forbes asked his friend, Lord Woodhouselee, an accomplished translator, to compare the translations of Virgil by Dryden, Warton, and Beattie, and Forbes included these remarks in the appendix to his Life. Woodhouselee argues that Warton's translation was overall the best of them, while "Beattie's translation, though not equally correct,...has in the more remarkable and splendid passages, done most justice to the original: and that Dryden,...has, from carelessness and a defect of taste,...fallen below them both."⁷⁹ John Conington recognizes in the translations Beattie's personal style: "Beattie is pleasing rather than vigorous, and this is the character, both

⁷⁹ W. Forbes, 2:368.

positively and negatively, of his translation, which is freely executed, and contains at least as much of the author as of his Latin model.”⁸⁰ Beattie includes the various translations to prove his versatility and competence as a poet.

This first volume of poetry is essentially what Beattie perceived was expected from a new poet with serious ambition, as its forms and themes vary widely to illustrate his ability and sincerity. The preface is an interesting example of a youthful poet’s attempt to introduce himself as a selfless poet, lacking the ambition to fame and glory which various poems in the collection deride. This characterisation is complicated by the inclusion of various poems written for particular patrons, such as “The Invocation of Venus” for Francis Garden and “Elegy Occasioned by the Death of a Lady” in honour of Lord Monboddo’s sister. Clearly in this first volume, Beattie is anxious to honour his patrons, and to prove that his poetical powers are highly regarded among the best in his neighbourhood.

This inaugural volume is interesting in that Beattie consciously attempts to present himself as a new poet worthy of notice, and also presents provocative ruminations upon the effectiveness of the Christian faith to console those in mourning. Beattie’s elegiac poems in this volume are unique, because they question the extent to which Christian dogma can console those who lose loved ones. For subsequent editions he removes such questioning sentiments from those elegies he chooses to retain, and dooms the rest to ignominy. OPT is also interesting because in it he also introduces many of the themes that will occupy his poetic career, such as the problematic nature of ambition, the consequences of worldly success, the workings of the imagination, and how solitude effects the processes of the mind.

⁸⁰ John Conington, The Miscellaneous Writings of Conington, ed. J. A. Symonds, 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1872) 1:165.

Chapter 2: Politics, satire, and philosophy; the ambitious second collection

Poems on Several Subjects (1766)

Beattie's second volume of poems took on a different character from his first volume. Though this volume does include many of the poems in OPT, he confided in Thomas Blacklock that in revising them he had "bestowed no little pains in correcting [them]; and I flatter myself they are much less exceptionable now than they were formerly."⁸¹ The revised poems are interspersed throughout the volume, and its structure is not altogether thematic. It opens with a poem that was first published in pamphlet form in 1765, a little more than a year previously to this publication. "The Judgement of Paris" represents a pivotal moment in Beattie's poetic growth; it is his first extended poetic exploration of philosophical subjects. He states in the preface that his purpose is to poetically investigate philosophical issues relating to morality and the ethics of virtue and ambition. The inability of the poem adequately to explore these themes foreshadows the crisis of development in The Minstrel.

The revised odes follow, and "An Elegy Occasioned by the Death of a Lady" is followed by a new elegy. He then includes "The Hares," followed by a new fable "The Wolf and Shepherds." He also includes a second poem that had appeared as a pamphlet earlier in 1765, "On the report of a Monument to be erected in Westminster-Abbey, to the Memory of a Late Author." Verses written by Dr. Thomas Blacklock in the margins of a volume he presented to Beattie as a gift appear after the satire, and Beattie's epistolary response to Blacklock's comments are also included, and focus generally upon ambition and worldly success.

⁸¹ Beattie to Thomas Blacklock, 26 May 1766. Beattie, Correspondence 2:45.

Curiously, the volume ends with the new “The Battle of Pygmies and Cranes,” an imitation of the Latin from Addison. Though Beattie’s is particularly modelled upon Addison, the mock epic had been employed earlier in the century by Parnell, in his translation of the Battle of the Frogs and Mice. He opens the volume with his most recent poem, and then proceeds, as before mentioned, in a slightly thematic fashion. There is no hint in his letters as to his design for the structure of the edition, except for a mention of the final poem.⁸² This volume has a more focused political purpose than his first volume, and illustrates Beattie’s firm desire to protect and defend established values and morality from the libels of radicals such as Churchill and Wilkes, as well as questioning the contemporary desire for success and ambition.

The new poems in the edition are divided into elegy, fable, and epistle; each thematically dealing with the political and social context of England during the Seven Years’ War and the mid seventeen-sixties. Beattie’s letters during the this period reveal his consistent concern with the public’s reception of this volume, concern which is not recorded in connection with his first volume, doubtless because his reputation and acquaintance has enlarged since 1760. He is poignantly aware that the popular reception of his work might not be positive: “Every body reads poetry, if perhaps one of a thousand readers understands it; but of those who do understand it not one in two thousand has the courage or activity to think for himself.”⁸³ His assessment of the popular opinion regarding poets and professional writers illustrates his continued desire to please an audience, but to do so through good work.

⁸² “I beg you will be fond of the last piece in the collection, the battle of the pygmies and cranes; for I am very fond of it myself.” Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot 28 June 1766. Beattie, Correspondence 2:47.

⁸³ Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 28 June 1766. Beattie, Correspondence 2:47.

Many of the poems in this edition are not included in Beattie's subsequent poetical volumes. One of the poems which was not included in any other editions is the satire of Charles Churchill.⁸⁴ He feared Churchill's popularity and his influence among the London literati, whose political leanings and satirical bent could be troubling. His only published satire⁸⁵ is interesting within the context of the decline in satire, and also exemplifies Beattie's desire to build a reputation in the manner common in the mid seventeen-sixties.

Pamphlet Poems revised in the Edition

"The Judgement of Paris" occupied Beattie's poetic imagination for many months up to its publication in pamphlet form in 1765. It is Beattie's most ambitious poetic expression up to this point; his first extended attempt to utilise poetry as a vehicle for philosophical expression. Naturally his plans and ambitions for the poem occupy many of his letters during the period of its composition and publication, illustrating his high expectations for its reception among his friends, and among the public at large. His motivations for this poem's composition are made clear in a letter to Robert Arbuthnot: "Though instruction be no essential part of Poetry, yet I think they ought never to be disjoined. The poet, both in choosing his subject, and in laying down his plan, should have an eye to Morality."⁸⁶ His beliefs in the merits of poetic didacticism mirror those of Alexander Pope's "Essay on Man," which provided Beattie with a model for his own poetic philosophy.

⁸⁴ "I have not now the least expectation, that this publication will prove successful; the verses that relate to Churchill will prove the damnation of the whole, at least in as far as the English criticks can damn it." Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 28 June 1766. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:47.

⁸⁵ Beattie composed but never published two prose satires. See p. 187.

⁸⁶ Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 20 October 1764. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:30.

It is interesting that Beattie characterises the poem as an “Essay” (iv) in his explicating preface, a word of course reminiscent of the “Essay on Man.” In Pope’s design for the “Essay on Man” he highlights the precarious nature of philosophical poetry: “I was unable to treat this part of my subject in more detail, without becoming dry and tedious; or more poetically, without sacrificing perspicuity to ornament, without wandring from the precision, or breaking the chain of reasoning.”⁸⁷ It is not surprising that Beattie’s desire to portray moralistic ideas in verse would be plagued by many of the problems cited earlier by Pope. Beattie chose allegory as the vehicle for his moral investigation, and he explains the setting and character of the goddesses of the poem later in the same letter to Robert Arbuthnot.

He explains how he has altered this pagan myth to suit eighteenth-century morality: “Let Juno represent the Patroness of Ambition, Pallas the Power of Wisdom, and Venus the goddess of Pleasure; and let them talk in such a way as becomes beings of a superior order; and then it is possible to apply the Judgement of Paris to a moral purpose.”⁸⁸ The poem’s versification is part of the elevated speech referred to in the letter; and the poem assesses different arguments for satisfying human desires and passions through the speeches of these three goddesses. Beattie hopes that “philosophical poetry promises to bring a larger repertoire of human responses to bear on philosophical questions than is usual in prepositional prose: the emotional, the aesthetic, and the ethical as well as the logical.”⁸⁹ Beattie’s inability to fulfil this purpose for philosophical poetry will climax in the crisis of the conflict between poetic inspiration and reason in The Minstrel.

⁸⁷ Alexander Pope, The Poems of Alexander Pope: A One Volume Edition of the Twickenham Pope, ed. John Butt (London: Methuen, 1963) 502.

⁸⁸ Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 20 October 1764. Beattie, Correspondence 2:31.

⁸⁹ Harry M. Solomon, The Rape of the Text: Reading and Misreading Pope’s “Essay on Man” (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1993) 57.

The poem did not receive much revision between the first publication as a pamphlet and its subsequent version in PSS. Given the great care and attention Beattie lavished on the poem for its 1765 debut, it is understandable that less than a year later there would be few significant changes needed to suit his plan. Beattie's preface to the poem for the pamphlet version is included in some editions of PSS, and it reflects many of the sentiments he expressed to Arbuthnot. The ambitious philosophical purpose set out in the preface is not fully developed in the poem, illustrating Beattie's limitations regarding the use of poetry as a philosophical mode of expression.

He begins with the nature of virtuous self-denial: "For our appetites and affections are in many instances incompatible; and whatever course of life we pursue, we must forego some gratifications, if we hope to attain others" (iii). He then turns to sensual pleasure, and the characteristics of virtue and ambition: "Virtue hath a natural tendency to produce, and is perfectly consistent with the amplest and most diffusive gratification of our Whole Nature" (iv). Conversely, "The pursuit of Ambition, or of Sensual Pleasure, can promise only partial happiness; being adapted, not to our whole constitution, but only to a part of it" (iv). These two opposing views of pleasure and self-denial are clearly stated, but find no clear expression in the poem. The preface does explain the overarching thematic elements of the poem, but vindicates the use of a pagan myth to his Christian audience. The poem attempts to reconcile the varying kinds of pleasure and levels of fulfilment in different human vocations and activities.

This initial frustration will have lasting effects upon the further development of Beattie's poetic career, the abrupt ending of The Minstrel being an example of this crisis of development. The poem opens with Paris depicted as a shepherd amidst natural scenery: "Where flowery woodbines wild by Nature wove / Form'd the lone bower, the Royal Swain

reclin'd" (3-4). This neighbourhood is devoid of temporal cares, and "He to oblivion doom'd the listless day; / Inglorious lull'd in Love's dissolving arms, / While flutes lascivious breath'd th' enfeebling lay" (46-48). Paris is characterised by sloth, his poetic powers producing feeble songs, because they are not inspired by activity in nature. Introducing him as an animal of pleasure alone is important to the development of the poem's moral argument, because it is through various types of pleasure that the three goddesses will champion virtue.

This attempt to reconcile pleasures with virtue is the most prominent investigation of the poem. The goddesses are introduced into the poem with great spectacle, one in which "Keen were her eyes to search the inmost soul; / Yet virtue triumph'd in their beams benign" (97-98). On this manifestation Paris looks in awe, "His kindling cheek great Virtue's power confess'd; / But soon 'twas o'er, for Virtue prompts in vain, / When Pleasure's influence numbs the nerveless breast" (102-4). Pleasure is here indicted for its ability to distract the soul from virtue which Beattie argues leads to destruction of the soul and of society generally, as evidenced by his chosen fable. Juno, "the Empress of the skies" (118), makes the first appeal to Paris. Beattie explains to Arbuthnot his intentions for this introductory speech: "I endeavoured in that speech to set off the charms of Ambition with every ornament consistent with the semblance of virtue."⁹⁰ Juno attempts to illustrate the compatibility between ambition and virtue, but this is shown to be an unrealistic pairing, because ambition becomes the strongest motivation, and will ultimately destroy virtue.

Though ambition and virtue are opposing forces, Juno praises the worth of ambition because it urges humans to reach their potential:

Hence the bold wish, on boundless pinions born,

⁹⁰ Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 20 October 1764. Beattie, Correspondence 2:31.

That fires, alarms, impels the maddening soul;
 The hero's eye, hence, kindling into scorn,
 Blasts the proud menace, and defies controul" (137-40).

Ambition becomes the driving force within Paris, guiding all his actions in pursuit of an undisclosed goal. Ambition is characterised as all-consuming, which leads to an eclipse of all virtue within the soul. Although ambition can sometimes be a great asset it must be checked by virtue, because "unimprov'd, Heav'n's noblest boons are vain" (141). In fact, by championing the cause of ambition Juno also exposes its flaws, in that she holds up the products of ambition as selfish vanity: "Vain then, th'enlivening sound of Fame's alarms, / For Hope's exulting impulse prompts no more; / Vain even the joys that lure to pleasure's arms" (161-63). The warnings and cautions of virtue are overshadowed by the lust ambition plants in the soul.

The following speech belongs to the goddess Pallas, who "recommends Virtue, [which Beattie considers to be synonymous with knowledge] as being that which gratifies our whole nature, and the perfection of it."⁹¹ It is wisdom that will lead Paris from the dangers of ambition and war, but this wisdom can only be found in calm scenery by a mind mild and open to receive it: "Rage, ecstasy, alike disclaim her power, / She wooes each gentler impulse of the breast" (227-28). The landscape of the poem is fitting for such enlightenment, but the mind and heart of Paris must also be calm and penitent. Pallas urges the swain to "curb the keen resolve that prompts thy soul" (240) to the extreme emotions and ambitious actions that separate him from wisdom. The main argument Pallas makes is that virtue, not ambition alone, can satisfy all the needs of humanity:

Explore thy heart, that rous'd by glory's name

⁹¹ Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 20 October 1764. Beattie, Correspondence 2:31.

Pants all enraptur'd with mighty charm—

And does Ambition quench each milder flame?

And is its conquest that alone can warm?" (243-6).

To prove this true to Paris, the goddess then recounts the consequences of ambition in war. Implicitly undercutting Juno's argument, Pallas asks if wars that "drench the balmy lawn in steaming gore" (246) and leave maids weeping, "Her love for ever from her bosom torn" (252) can bring Paris contentment or joy, which is prophetic of his and Helen's fate. By satisfying the lust of ambition he turns his back upon the virtue. Pallas urges him to listen "With grateful awe attend to Nature's voice, / The voice of Nature Heav'n ordain'd thy guide" (307-8). Should Paris follow this path, "Then shall the Shepherd sing in every bower, / And love with garlands wreath the domes of Pride" (339-40). Harmony and peace will continue in this secluded place if Paris heeds Pallas and chooses internal and intellectual prosperity over the temporal glory won by ambition.

Venus, on the contrary, "recommends Primarily and directly Pleasure, because life is short,"⁹² very similar to the argument of the Epicureans Beattie had encountered in Lucretius or indeed the Cyrenaic school of Aristippus, who believed the pursuit of pleasure should not be mingled with restraint or moderation. Venus first turns to wars, disclaiming them because their end result is not pleasure: "Joyless and cruel are the warrior's spoils, / Dreary the path stern Virtue's sons ascend" (375-6). This is the first time in the poem any goddess has specifically referred to the life of the virtuous in negative terms. Ambition is called into question not because it alters the noble heart and mind, but because the difficulty encountered in obtaining it brings no pleasure: "Ah! why should man pursue the charms of Fame, / For ever-luring, yet for ever coy?" (389-90).

⁹² Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 20 October 1764. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:31.

The argument against ambition is not because it is adverse to virtue, but rather because it does not satisfy the human need for pleasure.

Venus reasons that violence sparked by ambition can never bring pleasure and so she urges Paris to continue his ease:

Let not my Prince forego the peaceful shade,
The whispering grove, the fountain and the plain.
Power, with th'oppressive weight of pomp array'd,
Pants for simplicity and ease in vain (437-40).

The natural scenery lends itself to ease, which is contrasted by the struggle of ambition.

Venus does advocate virtue in Paris, because it can satisfy his need for pleasure without removing him from the enchanted plain: "Nor I from Virtue's call decoy thine ear; / Friendly to Pleasure are her sacred laws" (481-82). Venus shows Paris that "The bower of bliss, the smile of love be thine, / Unlabour'd ease, and leisure's careless dream. / Such be their joys, who bend at Venus' shrine" (513-15) which will lead him to choose her. The reference to the Bower of Bliss in The Faerie Queene recalls another warning bell, which foreshadows the importance of Spenser's epic to The Minstrel. The speech of Venus is persuasive, and reflects the Epicurean philosophy that informed upon Beattie's earliest poetry.⁹³

The beauties of nature enabled Venus to win Paris to her cause; and this choice foreshadows the devastation of the fall of Troy. Beattie uses graphic personification to drive home his point: "With horror's scream the Ilian towers resound" (530). By gratifying sensual pleasure rather than wisdom or even ambition, Paris leads his people to destruction. Sensual pleasure wins Paris because its gratification is more immediate and perceptible than the others.

⁹³ His early knowledge of Epicurean philosophy is supported by his translation of the invocation in 1760. Beattie questions the tenets of Lucretius's philosophical poetry through his own composition, but he is not yet very effectively explicating the philosophical ideas he recounts in the preface.

“The Judgement of Paris” is Beattie’s first poem that openly attempts to advance moral imperatives, and signals an important shift in his poetical thought. It shows his personal understanding of his role as a poet, to please and instruct his readers by whatever apparatus is most effective. Beattie’s desire to use poetry as a moral and political vehicle is more evident in his satire of Charles Churchill, because it expresses Beattie’s personal political and social values with regard to the nature of poetry and satirical verse as propaganda.

By early February 1765 Beattie had finished composing “Verses occasioned by the death of the Reverend Mr Charles Churchill,” a satire in the tradition established by Dryden and Pope, either of whom envisaged “the satirist as moral physician.”⁹⁴ Everard King argues that this is the context in which the poem is the most compelling: “the poem offers an interesting perspective on the political, literary and religious ideas which marked the waning of the spirit of Augustan satire, but also that it is a better poem than the modern commentators on Churchill will allow it to be.”⁹⁵ The biting nature of the satire fed Beattie’s insecurities concerning the timeliness of the poem, but his desire to defend established religious and political values made him feel justified in publishing this satire after the death of its subject.

Despite his confidence in the justness and the motivation of the satire, he was not altogether confident that it would be received well. This lack of confidence in his satire came from his lack of public attention to Churchill during his lifetime: “Had I appeared as his antagonist during his life, I would not have hesitated a moment to attack his memory.”⁹⁶ This satire is the first of Beattie’s public forays as an antagonist, though his name was withheld

⁹⁴ William C. Dowling, *The Epistolary Moment: The Poetics of the Eighteenth-Century Verse Epistle* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991) 83.

⁹⁵ Everard King, “James Beattie’s ‘Verses Occasioned by the Death of the Revd Charles Churchill’ (1765) and the Defense of Augustan Satire” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 11.4 (1974): 235.

⁹⁶ Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 5 February 1765. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:34.

from the poem until its inclusion in PSS. It is his inaction in the face of the living Churchill, who would undoubtedly have responded in kind to the poem that animated Beattie's insecurities. To combat the expected ill reception he consented to publish the satire: "Only the name of the Author must remain a secret at least till the nation comes to a better way of thinking; a period which I am afraid is not very near."⁹⁷

The pamphlet version of the poem was printed anonymously in London in 1765, (the poem is signed January but it is unclear when in that year it went to press), and retains the title proposed in this letter. This anonymity did not last as long as originally intended, but revisions made to the text subvert the subject of the satire. Beattie's awareness of Churchill's popularity, even in death, is clear in his stipulation that the pamphlet should be published anonymously. He was not yet willing to sign his name to such defamatory verse, which differed little from Churchill's slandering of others, except in so far as Beattie felt his cause was indeed a noble one.

Charles Churchill had begun his career as curate at Rainham, but turned to poetry as a better means of sustaining his household.⁹⁸ The late eighteenth-century satirist inherited from Pope the role of moral observer but Churchill's satires are anything but objective. Beattie perceived Churchill as a satirist who employed the genre for his own personal ends, without any thought to the justice of his cause. Beattie believed that Churchill's satirical attacks dismissed the moral underpinning implicit in ridicule and satire. It is an interesting response to the kind of political and social commentary in London after the death of Pope. Many of the jibes and sins he lays at Churchill's door are a reaction to the use of poetry as propaganda rather than virtuous didacticism.

⁹⁷ Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 5 February 1765. Beattie, Correspondence 2:34.

⁹⁸ Charles Churchill, The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill, ed. Douglas Grant (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1956) paraphrased from xii-xiii.

Augustan satire was “a group effort against pride, irrationality, extremism, credulity, and vulgarization.”⁹⁹ But for Churchill and his friends satire takes on another purpose; to ridicule enemies and to advocate radical Whig sentiments at the expense of their political opponents. It lacks the moral agenda Dryden, Pope, and Beattie believed necessary to the genre. Indeed, “the informing principle of Beattie’s satiric technique entails the presentation of the world of English letters in terms of the very worst and the very best in literature.”¹⁰⁰ Beattie considered satire which was intended to advance political agenda and debase reputations to make a living was dangerous to society, because it lacked a moral focus.

While Beattie insists in letters and in the poem’s preface that it was composed and printed solely upon the advice and urging of friends, there is I think a more personal motivating factor. Churchill co-edited with John Wilkes¹⁰¹ The North Briton, a pamphlet intended to satirize the inhabitants and customs of Scotland. The pamphlet was part of a larger campaign to discredit the King’s Scottish advisor, Lord Bute, who they saw as exercising undue influence upon the young monarch.¹⁰² Wilkes and Churchill’s publication also presented a radical Whig political outlook, which was intended to combat a government circular of similar name, which was used to reconcile the public to unpopular government policies. The North Briton was, among other things, “a satirical commentary on the widely-held belief that the new administration was over-heavily staffed with Scots and over-tender to Scottish interests.”¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Thomas Lockwood, Post-Augustan Satire: Charles Churchill and Satirical Poetry, 1758-1800 (Seattle: U of Washington P, 1979) 14.

¹⁰⁰ King, “Beattie’s ‘Verses’” 238.

¹⁰¹ Beattie’s brother-in-law Alexander Dun was mentally disturbed and was imprisoned for an attempt on John Wilkes’s life. Roger Robinson, “The Madness of Mrs. Beattie’s Family: The Strange Case of the ‘Assassin’ of John Wilkes” British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies (1996) 185-97.

¹⁰² John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute, served as tutor to George III and was later made a cabinet minister. Though Bute resigned from the cabinet in April 1763 “He retained the King’s confidence and friendship but without public office and public responsibility” which unnerved some politicians as well as the public. Frank O’Gorman, The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832 (London: Arnold, 1997) 204.

¹⁰³ George Rudé, Wilkes and Liberty: A Social Study of 1763 to 1774 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1962) 21.

It seems logical that these overt attacks upon the Scots would not be looked upon favourably in Scotland, and it stands to reason that the youthful Beattie would feel morally bound to strike back at the memory of the author of such anti-Scottish propaganda. It would be naïve to argue that Beattie's outright condemnation of Churchill's satire was solely based upon its lack of merit. I believe Beattie found Churchill's lifestyle, his neglect of his duties as a clergyman, and his radical politics, to be damaging to the sensibilities of moral citizens. It is also possible that these factors clouded his judgement of Churchill's poetry, since the latter's intent was to undermine the establishment, which had already elevated Beattie; it was in his interest to publicly denounce him, even initially anonymously.¹⁰⁴

The characterisation of Churchill in the pamphlet remains in the version printed in PSS, though his name is omitted along with that of his compatriot John Wilkes. Churchill is known as "Bufo" and Wilkes is left with mere "—" to denote his name. Beattie also made the title of the poem a little ambiguous, "On the report of a Monument to be erected in Westminster-Abbey, to the memory of a Late Author." The pamphlet edition has no introduction, but the revised version of PSS does include one. With regard to the pamphlet, Beattie reasoned: "the introduction to a poem written under the impulse of indignation does not stand in need of that simplicity of thought and expression, which in works of a different spirit may be very commendable."¹⁰⁵ To introduce the version Beattie would place his name upon, he includes "Part of a Letter to A Person of Quality," which was originally a private letter to Lord Erroll.¹⁰⁶ The letter is a public display of Beattie's motivations, as well as his attempt to justify his degrading verse to his patron.

¹⁰⁴ His chair of Moral Philosophy at Aberdeen was a crown appointment.

¹⁰⁵ Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 11 February 1765. Beattie, Correspondence 2:35.

¹⁰⁶ "I have sent the verses to Lord Errol, accompanied with a letter, of which I must beg leave to insert a copy. 'My Lord, I take the liberty to offer to Your Lordship a small poem [...] And less your Lordship, who are so well acquainted with every thing that relates to true honour, should think hardly of me for attacking the memory of the Dead, I beg leave to offer a few words in my own vindication—' Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 20 April 1765. Beattie, Correspondence 2:38.

He admits that if the verses were written “to gratify private resentment, to promote the interest of any faction, or to recommend myself to the patronage of any person whatsoever, I should have been altogether inexcusable.”¹⁰⁷ Beattie situates his poem against Churchill as a noble endeavour “to do some small service to my country, and to the cause of truth and virtue.”¹⁰⁸ Truth and virtue are, of course, the very qualities that, Beattie argues Churchill manipulated, in order to stir the sentiments of the mob and make a profit.

The poem characterises Churchill as a poet whose only thoughts are of “Fame, dirty idol of the brainless crowd” (3). Churchill’s personal life was not above reproach, which added fuel to Beattie’s arguments concerning his witty jibes at prominent government officials. To Beattie, he is “By nature uninspir’d, untaught by art, / With not one thought that breathes the feeling heart, / With not one offering vow’d to Virtue’s shrine” (7-9). His satires in defence of Wilkes, such as “An Epistle to William Hogarth,” defame the government and its supporters. Therefore it is natural he would have found an enemy in Beattie and his circle of Scottish intellectuals. The poem asserts that Churchill made his name “For ribaldry, for libels, lewdness, lies, / For blasphemy of all the good and wise” (13-14). The pamphlet wars in which Churchill participated were sparked by the political manoeuvrings of the time; clearly “the politics of the early years of George III’s reign presented too large a scope for satire not to have attracted him.”¹⁰⁹ It is this use of poetic talent to defame officials in office and enliven the ignorant crowd that disturbed Beattie, because it is fundamentally opposed to what he believed to be the purpose of poetry.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ James Beattie, *Poems on Several Subjects* (London: Johnston, 1766) 122.

¹⁰⁸ Beattie, *PSS* 122.

¹⁰⁹ Grant, xv.

¹¹⁰ Beattie outlines the purpose of poetry in his “Essay on Poetry and Music,” see pp. 233-34.

Beattie's main method of discrediting Churchill as a poet is to hold his writing up to real poetic geniuses England has produced; namely Milton, Spenser, Shakespeare, Pope, Gray, Shenstone, Young, and Akenside. These poets are held up as exemplars of true poetic beauty and virtue, whose poetry "Soothes, melts, alarms, and ravishes the heart" (30). The speaker then ponders the ability of Britain to produce these poets of superior quality and genius as well as a money-seeking political meddler such as Churchill: "And shall a Churchill's most polluted name / Stain her bright tablet of untainted fame? / Shall his disgraceful name with their's be join'd" (57-59). Beattie further labels Churchill as an impious scribbler whose memory should be cast into ignominy: "His name accurs'd, who leagued with Wilkes and hell, / Labour'd to rouse, with rude and murderous yell, / Discord the fiend, to toss rebellion's brand" (61-63). Beattie demonises the satires of Churchill because their only purpose is to inflame the populace against certain ministers and regulations of the new regime. Their cleverness and wit serve only to degrade other men, rather than express any universal truths, and their manipulation of "virtue" and "art" to his fulfil his ambition.

The caricature of Churchill in the poem draws on the natural poet in "The Prophecy of Famine," which Beattie no doubt deplored, because it seems to legitimise poetry as an instrument of widespread political defamation and seduction. It is reminiscent of the temptation of Paris by Venus that Beattie condemns in "The Judgement of Paris." In Churchill's satire, the swain is described thus: "Trembling and blushing he the fair one views, / And fain would speak, but can't—without a MUSE" (7-8). The inspiration of the new poet's lays is a young maiden rather than any sublime natural scenery. The speaker argues that nature's law, "Which bends to fashion, and obeys the rules, / Impos'd at first, and since observ'd by fools" (95-96) loses its power. This satire labels the natural poet a mere

chronicler of the fashions and political trends of his time. Such a profession to Churchill was lucrative and wholly honourable, but to Beattie and his friends, Churchill's political propaganda threatened their values and general perceptions of poetry. Beattie places Churchill among such men: "hypocrites to truth, and fools to sense, / And fops to taste, have sometimes made pretence" (91-92) to pensions and other scraps of political favour earned by their verse, but their claims are not based on merit.

Beattie then calls into question Churchill's talent as a poet, which he admits is not wholly absent: "tho' here and there one lonely spark / Of wit half-brightens thro' th' involving dark, / To show the gloom more hideous for the foil" (99-101). Churchill's sporadic sparks of poetic talent are marred by his subject, tainting a talent that could be used for a more noble purpose. Indeed his wit and turn of phrase hides the defaming remarks from the less educated: "With gluttons, dunces, rakes, thy name had slept" (127). Then Beattie would not have "Rais'd this bold strain for virtue, truth, mankind, / And thy fell shade to infamy resign'd" (131-32). The poem vilifies Churchill in the way his verse did others. The final two lines of the poem close this chastisement of Churchill with eternal disapproval: "Sacred from vengeance shall his memory rest?— / Judas though dead, though damn'd, we still detest" (145-46). Linking Churchill's memory with that of Judas Iscariot is a poignant final analogy. Churchill has turned his back on God by neglecting his duties as a clergyman; he is a man who betrayed his talent as a poet in exchange for money and reputation, both among the general populace and Pitt's political followers. Beattie hopes that posterity will see through the witty turn of phrase and gentle rolling verse to see Churchill as a prostituted poet of propaganda.

Beattie explains that upon hearing “a monument in Westminster-Abbey was intended for one, whom even his Admirers acknowledge to have been an incendiary and a debauchee,” he took himself to recording for posterity what he believes to have been Churchill’s true character. What led Beattie to compose this poem was a simple idea: that opposition would be forgotten over time with such public and permanent honour as a monument dedicated to Churchill in such an important place. This introduction is an interesting example of Beattie’s self-fashioning within the volume. He is aware that the poem is of an inflammatory nature, and to justify his actions and win supporters he includes this history of the poem’s composition. Such an introduction was not needed in the pamphlet, since his identity remained unknown to the wider world. Beattie knew that to include the poem in this volume it would be necessary for him to explain his motives, since in style and content it differs significantly from the more refined and complicated verse that dominates the other work.

New Poems in the Edition

“Elegy [On Lady Erroll]”¹¹¹ is a remembrance poem for a lady of higher status than any Beattie has addressed before, but the poem’s thematic elements are similar to those of his previous elegies. The opening of the poem establishes the lady’s importance by raising the moral and social status of both subject and mourner: “If Fame pronounce thee beautiful and wise, / If pompous blazonry thy name adorn!— / Approach, with trembling awe, where ***** lies;” (2-4) while in the following stanza her qualities are labelled as gifts of the divine, elevating her character. The question of the poem is essentially whether the virtues of the lady are eclipsed by her death. If this is so, “What then avails to deck th’ exalted scene, /

¹¹¹ “The Elegy on Lady Erroll is printed without a title, as you advised.” Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 28 June 1766. Beattie, Correspondence 2:47.

If there the blasting storms of anguish fly, / If Frailty there displays her withering mien?" (10-12). This question is quickly followed by the first answer the poem will make, and introduces virtue as an integral part of human nature, thereby linking divine gifts to humanity with virtues gained by human experience.

The nature metaphors reinforce the connection between humanity and nature: "But Virtue (sacred plant!) no soil disdains; / The plant that Frailty's fiercest down defies. / Retir'd it blooms amid the lowly plains" (13-15). Virtue is personified as a plant that flourishes amidst even the roughest soil of humanity and blooms anew in every soul. The plant imagery is echoed from Gray's "Elegy," which also comments on the virtuous who live and die unknown: "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, / And waste its sweetness on the desert air" (55-56). The image of regeneration Beattie uses in the passage is complex, because it at once situates the dead within the cyclical movement of nature, and the blooming of that plant is an indelible reference to the rejuvenating power of human virtue.

The lady is characterised by a divine constitution: "Hers was th' indulgent soul untaught to blame, / Hers all the graces of the mildest mind" (23-24). The nobleness of her heart and soul are reinforced by the speaker, which makes the pain of her loss more poignant to the mourners. In the next stanza the usefulness of mourning is contemplated in the face of the heavenly existence promised by Christianity; but the language of the question seems to reinforce the inability of the question to be satisfactorily resolved:

Slight is your wound, who mourn a Guardian lost,
 Though grief's sharp sting now prompt the pious sigh;
 He lives, the friend of man, the muses boast,
 And Bounty's hand shall wipe your streaming eye (25-28).

The mourners are chastised for sorrowing over their loss, because it should be cause for rejoicing in the lady's heavenly ascension. The 'pious sigh' is evidence among the mourning that there is belief in this Christian afterlife: of course the 'He' of line 27 is Jesus, whose death and resurrection has made her new life possible.

Beattie chooses faintly sardonic diction in expressing what should be the consolation of these mourners. The 'muses boast' has obvious pagan connotations, but here cleverly refers to the narrative of Paradise Regained, the Christian epic in which Milton recounts the story of the death and resurrection of Christ, which makes eternal life possible for human beings. "Bounty's hand" takes away the mourner's tears because through Jesus there is a promise of eternal life. The effectiveness of this Christian consolation is apparent in the next stanza. But the effectiveness of the Christian afterlife as consolation to the living is once again called into question: "But ah! What balm shall heal His bleeding heart, / Who for the friend, and for the Lover mourns!" (29-30). The subject of the ambiguous pronoun has shifted from Jesus to a more contemporary mourning man, whose heart cannot be soothed by the cerebral promise made to him by religious doctrine. The speaker does not discount religious faith, but recognises that it does not act as a cure-all for the ills of a suffering caused by the death of someone dear. The poem then turns to other sources of comfort for the hurting heart. Poetry is the first prospective consolation: "Could ought of song avail to ease thy pain; / Or charm a Parent's, Sister's, Friend's despair; / Fain would the Muse attempt some soothing strain" (38-40). Poetry is powerless in the face of death, as is religious faith, an admission found at various levels of explicitness throughout Beattie's early memorial poetry. He questions the ability of poetry and the promise of eternal life to effectively heal the heart broken by the loss of a loved one. Though the poem offers no cure-all for this kind of pain, the poem shifts to more abstract mental possibilities.

Memory is initially invoked as a cure, after the pain of loss, but quickly “The vision flies, and leaves the mind to mourn, / Saddening each scene that pleas’d while SHE was by;” (49-50) and so reminiscences of pleasure become pain in the mind of the mourner. The remedy for the multifarious pain depicted here and in earlier elegiac poems is acceptance: “Come, Resignation, with uplifted brow, / And eye of rapture smiling though in tears; / Come, for thou lov’st the silent house of woe” (53-55). It is acceptance of our mutable nature that this poem champions as the true avenue of consolation. The poem argues that acceptance is the cure for the pain of loss, and for the pain and fear for the dying woman herself: “Come, for ’tis thine to soothe the Mourner’s smart,” (57). “And melt in heavenly dreams the parting soul” (60). The mourning must prepare themselves for their own ascension, by allowing her soul and theirs to bend to the contemplation of heaven. “Melt in heavenly dreams” is a perfect image to portray this dual resignation. The lady gradually disappears into dreams of heaven which become her reality; while the mourners allow her to disappear from their physical sight and exist only in their dreams and memories. The speaker then inserts himself as a mourner in the next stanza “We mark’d Thy triumphs in that hour of dread;” (61) evoking more pathos in the reader, and intimately connecting him to the subject. The lady’s personal resignation is depicted on her deathbed: “When from Her eyes, that look’d a last adieu, / Each weeping friend seem’d vanishing in shade, / And darkening slow the swimming scene withdrew” (62-64). Death separates the lady from her physical form and her earthly friends, leaving acceptance as her final companion during her transition from this world to the next.

Resignation is personified as the “Charon” of Christianity; the companion of the lady’s soul to heaven: “Thy chearing whispers calm’d her labouring breast, / And hymns of quiring angels charm’d the while; / Till the weak frame dissolv’d in endless rest” (66-68). Heaven is not specifically identified, but is depicted as the absence of suffering and mutability. “Elegy” depicts the mental process of grief, with our mutable life coupled with faith in a Christian afterlife as the proper response to mortal life and death.

Beattie’s fables were not looked upon by even his closest friends as the best of his poems.¹¹² The versification of “The Wolf and Shepherds, A Fable” is simple and of little novelty, but its commentary on the political situation of 1757 adds significance to it and its justifies its inclusion in the edition. The veiled political commentary of the allegory reinforces Loveridge’s argument that fable was used in this period as a “vehicle distinguished by the author’s ability to bend its traditions to suit his own needs.”¹¹³ The satirical nature of this poem’s content also has linkages with the evolution of this tradition. Beattie’s comments on the popular discontent stemmed from the defeats of the British navy and the losses in North America and the continent in the early part of the war.¹¹⁴ The fabulist tradition allows him to chastise government immorality and present the moral of the poem as social commentary, mingled with a high level of didacticism.

The opening of the poem introduces the charge the fable attempts to prove that laws “Have been like cobwebs in all ages. / Cobwebs for little flies are spread, / And laws for little folks are made” (2-4). The allegory will test the justice of laws and their authors, an important poetical question during this period of internal tension and threats from foreign powers. The wolf passes the shepherd’s home and finds a scene that excites his appetite.

¹¹² “‘The Wolf and the Shepherds, a Fable;’ in praise of which much cannot be said: for it has been already remarked, that ‘Fable’ was by no means a species of composition in which Dr Beattie excelled.” W. Forbes, 1:82.

¹¹³ Paraphrased from Loveridge, 5-11.

¹¹⁴ For fuller account of Beattie’s political idea, see pp. 24-25.

The shepherds were celebrating a holiday and the wolf saw a lamb: "That smoking, recent from the flame, / Diffus'd a stomach-rousing steam" (52-53). The wolf's sense of smell prompts the speech that fully explicates the moral of the fable. The wolf asks the shepherds if they can commit "What in a beast so much you blame? / What is a law, if those who make it / Become the forwardest to break it?" (71-73). The wolf then points to the hypocrisy of those who draft laws but fail to adhere to them: "Such laws from base self-interest spring, / Not from the reason of the thing" (76-77). This indictment of lawmakers and the establishment continues in the following stanza, in which one of the shepherds responds to the wolf's accusations. The response of a shepherd reinforces the hypocritical nature of law the fable attempts to prove: "But laws are made for such as you. / Know, Sirrah, in its very nature / A law can't reach the legislature" (83-85). The implications of these lines are self evident: they reveal a knowing hypocrisy from the law-makers. The diction of the fable's resolution creates an interesting role reversal. As the wolf begins to stalk away the shepherds, "The full-fed mongrels, train'd to ravage, / Fly, to devour the shaggy savage" (108-9). The shepherds are portrayed as greater predators than the wolf because they knowingly create hypocrisy within the community they are meant to protect. At the end of the poem Beattie includes "1757," to vindicate his politically charged allegory from its critics, and to establish the context in which it should be read and judged. Beattie then turns to the exaltation of Thomas Blacklock, a poor poet, whose gift of his poetry inspired Beattie's poetic epistle.

"Verses Written by Mr. Blacklock; on a blank leaf of his Poems, sent to the Author" was the inspiration for Beattie's poetic epistle that follows it. William Forbes tells us this poetic exchange began their friendship,¹¹⁵ and so its inclusion in the edition was a testament to a new friend as well as background for the epistle. Thomas Blacklock studied theology and

¹¹⁵ "Dr Beattie's and Dr. Blacklock's first intercourse seems to have arisen from a present, which Dr Blacklock had sent him of his works, accompanied by a copy of verses; to which Dr Beattie replied in a similar manner." W. Forbes, 2:371.

became a minister in the Church of Scotland; however his blindness instigated opposition to him within his parish and he resigned.¹¹⁶ He resided in Edinburgh and composed poetry as well as moral and religious philosophical tracts.

This particular poem deals with the tensions between the mind's inclinations to compose poetry versus more academic prose, as well as the ambition of a poetic audience. The tensions Blacklock recounts are similar to the conflict between poetic imagination and philosophical reasoning that culminate in The Minstrel.¹¹⁷ Blacklock's poem is a supplication before the shrine of poetry, but also to Beattie, who, he believes, possesses a poetic genius superior to his own. This elevation of Beattie's talents is clear from the first line: "O Thou! whose bosom inspiration fires!" (1) The supplication of the first stanza is addressed to Beattie: "Though with superior genius blest, yet deign / A kind reception to my humbler strain" (3-4). The next stanza attempts to explain to the reader how Blacklock's imagination is being used. He explains: "Severer studies now my life engage, / Researches dull, that quench poetic rage" (7-8). While his intellectual pursuits bend toward philosophy and religion, he hopes that poetry will not abandon his imagination, but rather "Resolve the labours of the tuneful choir, / And what I cannot imitate admire" (15-16). His hope is for the muses to allow him leave to revel in the poems his imagination is no longer able to create, because his focus has been turned to other more intellectual pursuits.

The final two lines of the poem reinforce his insecurity concerning his ability to continue composing poetry: "As thine melodious could my accents flow; / Then thou approving mightst my song attend, / Nor in a BLACKLOCK blush to own a friend" (18-20). Reproducing a private message Blacklock wrote to Beattie on the title page of his gift of poems sets the tone for Beattie's own poetic answer to this praise.

¹¹⁶ Paraphrased from W. Forbes, 2:371.

¹¹⁷ The second book of The Minstrel (1771-74) was the last poem Beattie composed for publication.

Beattie's response, "An Epistle, to the Reverend Mr. Thomas Blacklock," is an important moment in his career, for it marks the point at which he acknowledges the conflict between poetic and philosophical imagination.¹¹⁸ The conventions of the verse epistle lead to questions of authorial voice and poetic invention, and his chosen tone and voice in the poem are largely influenced by the epistles of Alexander Pope. An important element of those poems is that "Apart from George II, the recipients of his verse-letters are embodiments of those values which the poet seeks to uphold."¹¹⁹ The character of Blacklock Beattie builds in the epistle certainly fits within the tradition of exemplary recipients established by Pope. The poem is a monologue by Beattie to Blacklock, while at the same time offering a vehicle for the exploration of moral sentiments. In this way Beattie is able to explore the nature of the poet and the poet's relationship with society more personally than ever before. This personal stratum is evident in the apparent insecurity of Beattie concerning the finished poem: "I know not whether I have gained my point or not: but in composing that letter I was more studious of simplicity of diction than in any other of my pieces."¹²⁰ Beattie also took great care because the poem was foremost a response to a new friend whom he wished to honour.

The simple language of the poem lends itself to clear understanding, while the genre of epistle allows the reader to readily identify the public persona with the author. The opening of the poem shows Beattie consciously attempting to please his subject and inform his wider audience: "Hail to the Poet! whose spontaneous lays / No pride restrains, nor venal flattery sways" (1-2). Praise for Blacklock as a natural poet is coupled with Beattie's general dislike of poets who make their living through vulgar rather than virtuous verse.

¹¹⁸ "Mr. Blacklock was so kind as to send me lately a copy of all his works, with a complimentary copy of verses prefixed to it: I am preparing an epistle to him; it is now almost finished." (Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot Oct/Nov. 1765. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:40.

¹¹⁹ Peter Dixon, *The World of Pope's Satires: An Introduction to the "Epistles" and "Imitations of Horace"* (London: Methuen, 1968) 4.

¹²⁰ Beattie to William Forbes 30 January 1766. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:43-44. Also found in W. Forbes, 1:78. M. Forbes 42.

Poets inspired by nature must develop a more robust skin: “Who nor from Criticks, nor from Fashions laws, / Learns to adjust his tribute to applause” (3-4). The poem acknowledges that the reception of poetry from unambitious poets is often harsh: “Criticks, who, ere they understand, defame; / And friends demure, who only do not blame” (11-12). At the end of this verse paragraph, Beattie places his readers above such unthinking commentators and embraces the inevitable displeasure of critics:

Pleas'd to their spite or scorn I yield the lays
That boast the sanction of a Blacklock's praise.
Let others court the blind and babbling croud:
Mine be the favour of the Wise and Good (15-18).

There is an explicit reference to Blacklock's approval of Beattie's poems, and reveals Beattie's desire to cultivate the good opinion only of those who are worth his effort. Beattie intends to raise his reputation above the work of pamphleteers and professional scribblers; he accomplishes this end first by praising Blacklock, whose verse inspired this response, and by putting himself forward as a poet worthy of the notice of the wise and good.

The poem holds up Blacklock as an exemplary votary of the muses, a poet whose attachment to nature is worthy of emulation. Beattie presents himself as one “Who longs to emulate thy tuneful art; / But more thy meek simplicity of heart” (31-32). Blacklock's supplication to the muses in his poem is transformed by Beattie into a pensive desire and ambition, and he looks to Blacklock for guidance. The poet's first request is for the ability to empower or console his readers: “Teach me to rouse or soothe th'impassion'd soul, / And breathe the luxury of social woes” (38-39). This line echoes the sentiments of Pope's “Imitations of Horace” Epistle I.ii:

Let me for once presume t'instruct the times,

To know the Poet from the Man of Rymes:
 'Tis He, who gives my breast a thousand pains,
 Can make me feel each Passion that he feigns,
 Inrage compose, with more than magic Art,
 With Pity, and with Terror, tear my heart" (340-45).

Beattie's second request harkens back to classical models through distinctly pastoral imagery:

"Teach me thine artless harmony of song, / Sweet, as the vernal warblings born along /
 Arcadia's myrtle groves; ere art began" (47-49). The poet seeks to emulate classical political and social involvement exemplified in Homer and Horace, as well as the remote sylvan groves of Virgil's Eclogues. The poem expresses the combating elements of pleasure and instruction which Beattie was unable to fully reconcile in The Minstrel.

As if intended to foreshadow the crisis of imagination which abruptly ends The Minstrel, the poem then abruptly shifts to the current state of affairs in Britain, and Europe generally. The tone of the passage is in keeping with the social commentary of Pope, in which the poet acts as "A friend to truth and virtue, he is therefore a friend to all honest men."¹²¹ Beattie's motivation for this chastisement of the establishment is its abandonment of universal morality. Like Pope, Beattie calls into question the "defences and refuges of the age [as] convenient excuses for cowardice and inaction."¹²² Beattie then condemns the imperial ambition and obsession with characterises the age:

Too long, O Europe, have thy oceans roll'd,
 To glut thy lust of power, and lust of gold;
 Too long, by glory's empty lure decoy'd,
 Thy haughty sons have triumph'd and destroy'd (85-88).

¹²¹ Dixon, 9.

¹²² Dixon, 202.

The expansion of European states into the far reaches of the globe is of obvious concern, as well as the behaviour of the Europeans in the remote parts of the world. The poem cautions that the success and affluence of Europe should not be founded on the destruction and exploitation of others. This moral structure is extended to sceptical philosophers, whose theories, according to Beattie, trap the mind in a web of insecurity and doubt. The speaker asks “Can that be joy, which works another’s woe? / Can that be knowledge, which in doubt decays? / Can truth reside in disappointment’s maze?” (98-100). This is the first poetic attack on such philosophy and foreshadows the arguments that are essential to a full understanding of the philosophical undertones of The Minstrel.

The negative view of sceptical thought is personal to Beattie, and he will explore these flaws in scepticism in greater detail both in poetry and prose.¹²³ But this poem can do no more to address these dangers, and remains wary, “quench thy kindling zeal, presumptuous strain” (101), and so Beattie resumes his poetry of nature. In an ironic tone the speaker urges the natural poet, whose commitment to nature and virtue is only superficial, to become a follower of fashion: “Go, thou fond fool, thou slave to Nature’s charms, / Whose heart the cause of injur’d Truth alarms; / Go, herd in Fashion’s sleek and simpering train” (107-9). And so the uncommitted natural poet must enter a world adverse to his nature: “Go learn with courtly reverence to admire / A taste in toys, a genius in attire, / Music of titles, dignity of show” (115-17). These ironic instructions are rooted in Beattie’s own experiences during his first trip to London. He made this first trip in 1763; and as he was relatively unknown his experience was not as positive as his triumphant stay in the summer of 1773.

¹²³ Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism (1770) and The Minstrel; Or, The Progress of Genius (1771-74). Both deal thoroughly with the negative consequences of the indulgence of these theories.

The lines echo Pope's Essay on Man, specifically Epistle II which holds up the accomplishments of mankind in opposition to the knowledge of his own character: "Go, wond'rous creature! mount where Science guides, / Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state tides; / Instruct the planets in what orbs to run" (19-21). Pope was also commenting on the deplorable state of man, and his arrogant attitude toward the mysteries of nature. Beattie's reaction to the customs and behaviour of Londoners in 1763 presents an interesting context for the contrast the poem makes between natural poet and professional pamphleteer:

I have contracted too inveterate a relish for simplicity of manners, and the sentiments and the feelings of nature, for tranquillity, retirement, and meditation; here there is nothing but uproar, confusion and perpetual alarm; here every body labours to rid himself of thought; and here every thing that is worthy the attention of a reasonable being is hourly sacrificed to fashion, a Demon, which, though honoured with no temples, seems to be acknowledged here as 'king of kings, and lord of lords.'¹²⁴

Beattie's poet would better serve society in seclusion with the natural world for inspiration, rather than amongst the bustling, and ever changing attitudes of society. The poet should "Strive not on Fancy's soaring wing to rise; / The plodding rabble gaze not on the skies; / Far humbler regions bound their grovelling view" (133-35). The poets who do strive for popular fame and material success now come under the scrutiny of the poem, and meet with little sympathy.

¹²⁴ Beattie to James Dun, 1 June 1763. Beattie, Correspondence 2:15-19.

Before attacking two particular political satirists the poem speaks of their kind in general terms. These poets “Like spoils from Politicks thou may’st derive: / The theme is dirty, dark, and lucrative” (139-40). They represent the ebb and flow of popular opinion, and write for profit at the expense of all other aims. These pamphleteers are epitomised by Charles Churchill and John Wilkes, whom Beattie attacked in his “Verses.” In this society of money mongering “Thus ----- arose distinguish’d in the throng, / Thus Bufo plied a profitable song” (157-58). The author unnamed is John Wilkes, who attacked John Butte among many others. Bufo (a name borrowed from Pope) is Charles Churchill, a satirist and great friend of John Wilkes. These two are not mentioned again; instead the poet hopes their legacy shall be lost through time: “Proceed, Great Years, with steady glare to shine / Where guilt and folly bend at Fashion’s shrine” (159-60).

In stark contrast to those figures, the poet of nature reaches out to the beauty and truth of the universe: “Beauty’s pure ray diffus’d from Nature’s face, / Fancy’s sweet charm, and Truth’s majestic grace” (173-74). The poet is the moderator between humans and the natural world, and his poems enable them to connect with the world around them. For Beattie, the true poet is “The messenger of joy to man below, / Friend of our frailty, solace of our woe” (179-80). The failure of men such as Wilkes and Churchill to realise this purpose of the poet is their great tragedy. Their craving for temporal delights is vanity, because it neglects nature as the physical expression of the divine: “Th’applause of multitudes, or smile of kings. / But ah! can these, or those afford delight? / Can man be happy in his Maker’s spite?” (210-12). Their ambition alienates them from nature and leads to despair: “We perish, muttering this unrighteous strain, / ‘Joy was not made for man, and life is vain’” (221-22). In contrast to the end met by the poets whose goals are temporal success and worldly luxury, the poem lists the attributes necessary for the natural poet, which have been discussed throughout Beattie’s

early poetry: “Bring Resignation, undebased with fear; / And Melancholy, serious, not severe; / And Fortitude, by chance nor time controul’d” (235-37). The poem concludes with the hope that Beattie will be able to continue to be worthy of the title natural poet, with the abandonment of worldly ambition:

So shall my days nor vain nor joyless roll,
Nor with regret survey th’approaching goal;
Too happy, if I gain that noblest prize,
The well-earn’d favour of the Good and Wise. (241-44)

Beattie clearly speaks in his own voice, expressing his strong desire to be considered a poet in this tradition.

After the poem was printed, Beattie wrote to Blacklock, in terms that reinforce this disguise, and the kindred spirit he recognised in him: “Your approbation of my Epistle leads me to think, that you have the same taste for nature, for virtue, for simple truth, which animates my own breast.”¹²⁵ The friendship sparked by this poetic exchange flourished throughout Beattie’s lifetime, and this epistle articulates many of the general ideas concerning the character of the natural poet, ambition and the purpose of poetry that can be found throughout Beattie’s early work. While the reception by critics and the population at large may not have been as warm, the poem seems to have pleased its most important reader.

“The Battle of Pygmies and Cranes; Imitated from the Latin of Mr. Addison” is the final poem of the edition; and its political commentary is reminiscent of the other fables in the collection. Beattie held Addison’s work in great esteem, and his desire to imitate him further illustrates his admiration.¹²⁶ The plot of the poem is a particularly biting comment on

¹²⁵ Beattie to Thomas Blacklock, 26 May 1766. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:45-46.

¹²⁶ Beattie’s admiration for Addison continued throughout his life: “My models of English are Addison, and those who write like Addison, particularly yourself, Madam, and Lord Lyttelton. We may be allowed to imitate what we cannot hope to equal: nay I think we are, in every laudable pursuit, commanded by all the great

the empire building of Britain that results from the settlement of the Seven Years' War. The poem opens with the conventional invocation of the muses, and intermingles many ancient tales with one of contemporary importance: "Æneas founder of the Roman line, / And William glorious on the banks of Boyne? / O'er Pompey's fate who hath not learn'd to weep?" (15-17). Beattie juxtaposes ancient histories and larger-than-life heroes with the Battle of the Boyne, the victory that secured the English crown for William of Orange in 1690, and changed the political and social landscape of Britain. It is ironic that Beattie recounts this battle in these terms, since it initiated Britain's wider role as a Great Power, which Beattie seems to deplore.

The narrative of the battle between the pygmies and the cranes then begins, in which the fortunes of the once proud pygmies are reversed and they are destroyed. Initially, "While reign'd, invincible through many an age, / The dreaded pygmy; rous'd by war's alarms, / Forth rush'd the maddening manikin to arms" (40-42). Despite this strength, the ruthless behaviour of the pygmies during battle comes back to haunt them. The cranes, "For rous'd to vengeance by repeated wrong / From distant climes the long-billed legions throng" (75-76). In the battle that ensues between them the cranes lay waste to their enemy, and the climax occurs when the mightiest warrior of the pygmies is taken: "A fowl enormous, rousing from above, / Th' impetuous champion grasp'd, and soaring high, / (Sad chance of battle!) bore him up the sky" (162-64). With this event the tide of the battle turns irrevocably to the cranes, and so "[The pygmies] raise a weak and melancholy wail, / All in distraction scattering o'er the vale" (187-88). The destruction of these mythical people leads to the explication of the thinly veiled moral of the poem: "Short is the date to earthly grandeur given; / And vain are all attempts to roam beyond / Where fate hath fix'd the everlasting bound" (196-8).

The final lines bring the poem back to the inevitable end of humanity, attempting to give the poem a universal rather than merely political purpose.

This second volume of poetry solidifies many of the important topics Beattie introduced in OPT, such as the character of the natural poet, the consequences of ambition and success, and the adequacy of the afterlife promised by Christianity as comfort to those in mourning. The pamphlet poems represent Beattie's first extended use of poetry as a vehicle for philosophical reasoning, and a strongly phrased criticism of the professional political scribblers. Poems on Several Subjects is a mature attempt to reach a wider audience than his initial volume, and the poems collected explore many of these important themes, which find expression in The Minstrel.

Chapter 3: The Minstrel; the pinnacle of a poetic career

The Minstrel; Or, The Progress of Genius: Planning and Composition

More critical attention has been paid to The Minstrel; Or, the Progress of Genius (1771/4) than to all of Beattie's other poetical works combined. This corpus of criticism repeats a number of common misconceptions concerning the planning and composition of the poem. It is essential to my comprehensive study of Beattie's works to bring new evidence to bear upon these arguments, and in so doing to situate the poem within the wider context of Beattie's professional and intellectual growth. The protracted composition of the poem and the abrupt ending of the final Book have led many scholars to a simple conclusion: "Beattie does not know what to do with the Minstrel once he has made him."¹²⁷ Critics often mention the planned but never executed third Book as evidence of Beattie's lack of imaginative force, marking his inability to write a truly narrative poem. Kathryn Sutherland argues: "The planned third book in which his [Edwin's] career was to begin in earnest was, however, abandoned"¹²⁸ because its autobiographical nature could not sustain a full narrative. Conrad Brunstrom also subscribes to this conclusion: "He [Beattie] abandoned a third book...where he [Edwin] actually does something."¹²⁹ Everard King also refers to The Minstrel as an "unfinished poem [that] takes Edwin's development only to early manhood."¹³⁰ The only evidence produced to support this supposed third book comes from the diary of Fanny Burney. Upon meeting Beattie in London she "ventured a wish for a conclusion to the

¹²⁷ Kathryn Sutherland, "The Native Poet: The Influence of Percy's Minstrel from Beattie to Wordsworth," RES 33 (1982): 425.

¹²⁸ Sutherland, 425.

¹²⁹ Conrad Brunstrom, "James Beattie and the Great Outdoors: Common sense Philosophy and the Pious Imagination," Romanticism 3.1 (1997): 25.

¹³⁰ Everard H. King, "James Beattie and the Growth of Romantic Melancholy," Scottish Literary Journal 5 (1978): 24.

Minstrel. He [Beattie] owned he had written another book, but that he had disapproved and burned it.”¹³¹ I am reluctant to rely solely upon this evidence to assert that Beattie did in fact compose a third book of the poem. It seems unlikely that Beattie would have confided in Fanny Burney the existence of a third book, and neglected to share this information with his literary confidants. The composition of The Minstrel was protracted, and Beattie shared particular issues and themes, and I believe that if he did in fact draft a third book, it would have been mentioned in his correspondence, since he took particular care to inform various friends of the poem’s progress from 1766.

A close examination of his letters over the course of the poem’s composition calls into question this idea that in fact Beattie’s poem is unfinished. The circumstances of Beattie’s life changed significantly over these years, and so his plans and intentions for the poem developed and changed also. The evolution of his plans concerning the composition and publication of the poem as illustrated in the letters, as well as the circumstances that surround those decisions, make it difficult to simply label the poem as “unfinished” and “abandoned” by its author. For critics to determine adequately the state of the poem when Beattie finished it, his personal circumstances, both emotional and intellectual, must be taken into account.

Beattie initially introduces the poem to friends as the pastime of his mind during the gruelling composition of the Essay on Truth: “When tired of these dry and disagreeable disquisitions, I sometimes have recourse to my old acquaintance the Muse.”¹³² His intentions for the product of this relationship with his muse are also made clear later in this same letter: “I never intended more than two cantos; and if they were finished, I believe I should publish them.”¹³³ Later in the summer of 1768 he relates the narrative plans of the two cantos to Dr.

¹³¹ Fanny Burney, Diary and Letters of Madame D’Arblay, ed. Charlotte Barnet. 6 vols. (London; New York: Macmillan, 1905) 3:382.

¹³² Beattie to Thomas Blacklock, 24 May 1768 Beattie, Correspondence 2:58-60.

¹³³ Beattie to Thomas Blacklock, 24 May 1768. Beattie, Correspondence 2:58-60.

John Gregory. Beattie lays out the plot of the First Canto and introduces its moral subtext:

The First Canto is a Description of the childhood of a poetic visionary, in a solitary country, who derives most of his acquisitions in knowledge from his own observation; with reflexions and digressions, so continued as to diversify the subject, and suggest some useful moral meditations. Here and there too is a little touch of Satire.¹³⁴

Beattie clearly exposes the autobiographical nature of the poem; the childhood of the poetic visionary is reminiscent of Beattie's own experiences, which he will share with friends many years later.¹³⁵ These basic characteristics of the poem remain throughout Beattie's revisions of the finished poem, except the satirical passages. The early satirical passages connect the poem to contemporary Spenserian imitations, which utilised the verse form for its comedic potential. Beattie's elimination of the most striking of these passages shows his later desire to distance his poem from these eighteenth-century imitations, and to use Spenser's stanza, to explore a variety of new subjects.

The plan of the Second Canto clearly defines the role of the Hermit in the narrative, and the overarching themes for the poem. It also explains the later emendation of the plan to include a third canto:

I propose to introduce my Visionary to a Hermit, who is to give him instructions relating to arts literature and human life; he (the said Hermit) having been a man of the world in his youth. He will earnestly advise his pupil not to meddle with public life, nor devote himself to the unthrifty trade of the Muses. The young man is willing to follow his advice; but being stript of all

¹³⁴ Beattie to John Gregory, 1 July 1768. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:61-63.

¹³⁵ "I have made him [i.e. the poetic visionary] take pleasure in the scenes in which I took pleasure, and entertain sentiments similar to those of which even in my early youth, I had repeated experience." Beattie to Dowager Lady Forbes, 12 October 1772. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:186-88. Also found in W. Forbes, 1:204.

his possessions by a hostile invasion, is obliged through necessity to take his harp on his shoulders, and trudge abroad.¹³⁶

Beattie envisioned a long narrative to be developed in the poem, but over the protracted years of composition he amended his plan to span two rather than three cantos, dismissing the plot development alluded to in the final line of the above quotation. As David Hill Radcliffe astutely observes, the poem “terminates not in action, but in a higher state of consciousness.”¹³⁷ At the end of the poem there is no clear resolution to conflict between the poetic imagination and the consequences of the knowledge Edwin has gained from the Hermit.

Critics too easily label the underdeveloped plot as a simple failure of Beattie as a poet-which stigmatises him as an author unable to complete his vision because it stretched beyond his abilities. His understanding of the complex narrative he wanted led Beattie to consider adding a third canto, but he chose rather to limit the plot of the narrative and fully develop the swain’s education by the Hermit.¹³⁸ In 1769 Beattie intended The Minstrel to consist of three similar sized cantos, but since he limited his writing to leisure hours, the prospect of writing the third book became more and more remote.¹³⁹ Critics have acknowledged Beattie’s intentions for a third book, but none has more than superficially questioned why this plan was never realised; but in fact, the circumstances of Beattie’s personal life in the later years of composition shed some light on this neglected question.

¹³⁶ Beattie to John Gregory, 1 July 1768. Beattie, Correspondence 2:61-63.

¹³⁷ David Hill Radcliffe, “The Poetry Professors: Literary Imitation, Untutored Genius, and Cultural Identity.” Beauty and the Critic: Aesthetics in an Age of Cultural Studies, ed. James Soderholm (Tuscaloosa: U. of Alabama P, 1997) 174.

¹³⁸ “But you must observe that I never intended it should exceed two cantos, though now I forsee that the second must be a long one-perhaps if I find the rhyming humour continue, I may possibly extend it to three, but this I think will be the very utmost limit.” Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 17 March 1769. Beattie, Correspondence 2:82-84.

¹³⁹ Describes the poem as a piece of three books to Thomas Gray, 1769 (NLS Acc.4796, FB 99). However he does not sound optimistic about writing the third book: “If I live to finish the tale, from the action of the third book.” Beattie to Thomas Percy, 4 May 1772. Beattie, Correspondence 2:168-71.

The death of his close friend and confidante Dr. John Gregory in February of 1773 affected Beattie deeply, so much so that he adapted his plan for The Minstrel to include a memorial to Gregory. Beattie expressed the strength and importance of his relationship with Gregory to that gentleman's son: "I have lost the most attentive and most affectionate friend that ever man was blessed with. He knew me thoroughly, for I concealed nothing from him, and all my interests were as dear to him as to myself."¹⁴⁰ The elegy which ends The Minstrel was composed close to the first anniversary of Gregory's death, and Beattie relates to Mrs. Montagu his concern regarding the public reception of the conclusion in particular: "I am impatient to know your opinion of the other part, and particularly the conclusion, which I do not like the better for its being on a new plan, but to which I cannot help being partial."¹⁴¹

Though critics have declared in unison that Beattie's poem was unfinished, this passage reveals that Beattie consciously adapted his plan for the poem to include the elegy for Gregory, and nowhere in the letter does he mention the possibility of future expansion. Shortly after the publication of Book II in 1774, he laments in his letters to friends the poem's lack of fable, which he saw as a consequence of a defect implicit in the initial plan. This dissatisfaction with the limitations of the original plan could be a third factor influencing his decision not to continue the poem into a third book. He believed that the poem's defects "are faults in the first concoction; they result from the imperfection of the plan."¹⁴² The extended plot Beattie initially intended could not be realised once he decided to end the Second Book with an elegy and a farewell.

¹⁴⁰ Beattie to James Gregory, 27 February 1773. Beattie, Correspondence 2:209-11.

¹⁴¹ Beattie to Elizabeth Montagu, 13 March 1774. Beattie, Correspondence 2:258. Also found in W. Forbes, 1:332 and M. Forbes, 110.

¹⁴² Beattie to Elizabeth Montagu, 3 May 1774. Beattie, Correspondence 2:265-68.

Beattie's abrupt abandonment of his chosen fable has been used as proof of simple imperfection, and critics such as Radcliffe argue that it led later poets to finish Edwin's story, expanding on issues the poem does not resolve.¹⁴³ The imperfection that Radcliffe attributes to failure, Beattie recognised to be a fault in the poem's ability to offset didactic purpose with narrative flow. There is also a practical reason Beattie might have ended the poem abruptly. The immediate concern was his health. His letters rehearse in detail his physical ailments such as vertigo and a weak constitution. Whether his decision resulted from dissatisfaction with the original plan, or from a loss of commitment and stimulus in the aftermath of Gregory's death, or from some combination of the two is unclear, but the end Beattie chose for Book II leaves no room for future expansion.

The influence of Spenser upon The Minstrel is difficult to easily grasp; Beattie chose not to adopt many of The Faerie Queene's characteristic traits, such as archaic diction and allegory, though "Beattie's love of The Faerie Queene is described in one of his earliest surviving letters."¹⁴⁴ Beattie's evolving plans for The Minstrel mirror Spenser's own fluctuating intentions for The Faerie Queene. In the preface to the earlier poem, Spenser "rapidly sketches a plan to develop the three books he has written into a twelve-book epic, with an airy promise that, on proper encouragement, he will write twelve further books on the political virtues."¹⁴⁵ He does not fulfil this initial intention, and critics have investigated the circumstances that led Spenser to end the poem with the Mutability Cantos, the consensus being that by this time "he was tired; preoccupied; disenchanted."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ "This imperfection proved a standing invitation to imitators taking up three significant issues left unresolved in The Minstrel: 1) the relation of genius to historical progress, 2) the relation of genius to community, and 3) the relation of genius to education." David Hill Radcliffe, "Completing James Beattie's The Minstrel," Studies in Philology 100 (2003): 535.

¹⁴⁴ Robinson, "Origins and Composition" 227.

¹⁴⁵ A.C. Baugh, A Literary History of England (New York, London: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1948) 497.

¹⁴⁶ From Edmund Spenser, The Fairy Queene, ed. Douglas Books-Davies (London: Everyman, 1996) xxvi.

The Mutability Cantos were first published ten years after Spenser's death, a fact which has led critics to question whether they are meant to be a continuation of the original narrative or something separate. I agree with those critics who argue that these cantos "represent the fundamental struggle between constancy and change at the heart of The Faerie Queene"¹⁴⁷ and consider them the poem's end. Opposing critics argue that the numbers given to the books of the Mutability Cantos suggest that Spenser is beginning an entirely new narrative, but since these Cantos were not published in Spenser's lifetime, it is difficult to confidently ascertain his original intentions. These cantos in particular are of interest when considering The Minstrel as a Spenserian imitation.

They present a narrative separate from the other books, the trial and judgement of the Goddess Mutability; in the Eighth Canto the author's own voice reflects upon the human condition. The poem ends with a prayer: "With Him that is the God of Sabaoth hight: / O great Sabaoth God, grant me that sabaoth's sight."¹⁴⁸ The abrupt intrusion of the author's narrative voice to end the poem is reminiscent of Beattie's ending of Book II. However, some critics who have investigated the influence on The Minstrel of The Faerie Queene have concluded that "Beattie borrowed from Spenser only the stanza form and praised its flexibility," creating no more than a tenuous link between the two poems. Beattie's use of the Spenserian stanza marks an important shift in the use of the verse form. Previous imitations in the century had focused on the verse form's allegorical and didactic possibilities, but Beattie exploits "the melodic versatility of the stanza, the rich tonality, and the medievalism or, at least, the suggestion of the romantic past and exotic lands."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Rosemary Freeman, The Faerie Queene: A Companion for Readers (London: Chatto, 1970) 139.

¹⁴⁸ Sabaoth = Hosts, hight = called, host's; also sabbath's = eternal rest's. From Spenser, 582.

¹⁴⁹ The last two quotations in this paragraph are taken from Earl Wasserman, Elizabethan Poetry in the Eighteenth Century Illinois Studies in Language and Literature. (Urbana: U. of Illinois P, 1947) 121.

Beattie explains in his preface that the verse form pioneered by Spenser “admits both simplicity and magnificence of sound and language, beyond any other stanza that I am acquainted with.”¹⁵⁰ Beattie uses the descriptive nature of the stanza to depict scenes of intense natural beauty and their effect upon the imagination of his swain. His inventive manipulation “established the Spenserian stanza as a legitimate vehicle for mildly wistful, often moody, descriptive poetry”¹⁵¹ in the eighteenth century, which continued into the Romantic period in works such as Shelley’s Adonais.

The autobiographical nature of the poem is more complex than most critics have recognised, and there is also an important element of didacticism which leaked into it from Beattie’s lectures. It is commonly held that Beattie put much of his experience as a youth in Fordoun into the scenery and his own character into his youthful Edwin, but the didactic passages of the poem are also pointedly drawn from Beattie’s intellectual life. It is clear that “Beattie’s theology is also represented in Book One; the celebration of immortality, and the teaching of natural theology, closely follow his student lectures. In Book Two, the Hermit’s teaching reflects Beattie’s idea of the true purpose of philosophy: that it should be “the knowledge of nature applied to practical and useful purposes.”¹⁵² Though this is an important part of the development of the poem, a case can also be made from his letters that from the start Beattie knew this would be his final poem, and he is carefully rehearsing the issues involved in his own poetic career. The poem touches on the many important issues facing the poets of the eighteenth century, and focuses specifically upon Beattie’s own experiences. It is a multifaceted story of Beattie’s own life; as a youth in the guise of his minstrel Edwin, and in old age as the didactic narrator, and to some extent the Hermit Edwin will meet in Book II.

¹⁵⁰ James Beattie, The Misntrel; Or, The Progress of Genius. A Poem. Book the First (London: Dilly; Edinburgh: Creech, 1771) v.

¹⁵¹ Wasserman, 133.

¹⁵² Robinson, “Origins and Composition” 228.

The first Book introduces Edwin into the natural world and attempts to portray his growing poetic genius. This book also explores the poet's relationship to nature and its influence upon the imagination, as well as the effects of solitude and melancholy upon the creative mind. Scenes of nature's sublimity dominate the allusions of this book; they situate the poet in scenery that excites the imagination and inspire creation. The education Edwin receives in this book comes from the oral tradition, with his mother singing well-known ballads, reinforcing the reader's sense that the budding minstrel lived in the distant past.

The role of the oral tradition in the poem and the effect of those ballads upon the Minstrel's imagination is in fact an interesting contribution to the fierce debate at that time over the place and validity of oral tradition as a precursor to written poetry. The publication of Thomas Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry (1765) had inflamed the debate over the validity of written versus oral traditions concerning language and literary history. Percy's collection comes from manuscript sources; he argued that orally transmitted ballads could not be authenticated and deserved little acknowledgement from the intellectual community.

The previous publication of James Macpherson's Ossianic poems (1760) had complicated the issue of the validity of oral poetry, because "Ossian was presented as an oral phenomenon."¹⁵³ Macpherson himself also contributed to the ongoing debate, arguing that the oral nature of the Ossianic poems: "did not diminish the historical significance of the culture."¹⁵⁴ Beattie also engaged a little in the debate over the value of Ossianic poetry. Lord Kames believed Beattie to be writing a work "to depreciate the writings of Ossian,"¹⁵⁵ but Beattie explains his actual position to Robert Arbuthnot: "[I informed Lord Kames] That I was very far from any design of depreciating Ossian; that I had an high opinion of the merit of that bard, though I could not bring myself to think him on an equality with Homer and one

¹⁵³ Nick Groom, The Making of Percy's "Reliques." (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999) 75.

¹⁵⁴ Groom, 75.

¹⁵⁵ Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 5 March 1763. Beattie, Correspondence 2:14-15.

or two more.”¹⁵⁶ He considers Ossian here merely on his merits as a poet, and nowhere engages in the debate over the authenticity of the poems. Beattie uses the oral tradition in The Minstrel as a device to situate his swain in primitive surroundings, while remaining true to what he perceived as his cultural heritage.

The Second Book depicts the education of the youthful poet by the worldly-wise Hermit, and the eventual disillusionment Edwin feels as a result of this tutelage, which relates in a complex way to Beattie’s own life. He explores the implications and effects of knowledge and responsibility upon the act of creation by depicting Edwin’s reaction to his new-found knowledge. Education in human history and sciences comes from the Hermit, and will create the tension between imagination and intellect, which is at the very centre of the poem’s concerns. The resemblance of Edwin to the youthful Beattie is transparent, but there is a more veiled close relationship between Beattie and the character of his Hermit. The Hermit represents the older, jaded man whose life experiences have challenged the validity of his youthful ideas. Seen from this perspective, the education of Edwin presents an interesting dichotomy, with the older poet questioning the values of his younger self. The complications of this relationship help to explain the abrupt end of the poem’s narrative, in that the issues Beattie sought to address could not be continued into an expanded narrative.

The poem’s depiction of genius and the characteristics of its specifically poetic form are informed by contemporary philosophical investigations of the subject, such as William Duff’s An Essay on Original Genius (1767), which further explores the elements of original genius, and articulates many of the arguments Beattie expresses poetically. The role of the imagination has always been important in discussions of genius, and Duff outlines its relationship with taste in the mind of a poetic genius.

¹⁵⁶ Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 5 March 1763. Beattie, Correspondence 2:14-15.

According to Duff, imagination “lays the foundation for all our knowledge, by collecting and treasuring up in the repository of the memory those materials on which Judgement is afterwards to work.”¹⁵⁷ Beattie particularly adheres to Duff’s suppositions concerning the environment in which a genius thrives, and the age within human history during which poetic genius best flourishes. Duff also insists on original poetic genius “being most remarkably displayed in an early and uncultivated period of society.”¹⁵⁸ This advantage comes from the undoubted novelty of ideas and expression available to poets in the earliest times of human history. An object such as a poem can more easily appear new and fresh to an ancient genius and his readers, thus exciting “[the] attention, curiosity and surprise, [which is] highly favourable to the exertion of Genius.”¹⁵⁹ Beattie’s depiction of the landscape and the young minstrel’s interactions with nature poetically express these basic tenets of Duff’s theory.

Duff also stipulates that imagination, which denotes genius in its most infantile stage, is at its most active in the “vacant season of childhood and youth, [because this is] before the reasoning faculty discovers itself in any considerable degree.”¹⁶⁰ Book I of The Minstrel introduces Edwin as a poetic genius of the kind characterised by Duff, and his experiences in nature and the basic teachings of his parents reinforce this characterisation. His education by the Hermit in Book II poetically depicts his intellectual awakening, which forever changes his perceptions of the world and will ultimately lead to the crisis between reason and imagination.

¹⁵⁷ William Duff, An Essay on Original Genius (Bristol: Thoemmes-Routledge, 1994) 29.

¹⁵⁸ Duff, 265.

¹⁵⁹ Duff, 266

¹⁶⁰ Duff, 29.



Duff argues that “critical knowledge, which is so considerably diffused in modern times, must be equally unfavourable to the exertion of Original Poetic Genius in those times.”¹⁶¹ It is the critical knowledge Edwin gains in Book II that brings this conflict to the fore. For Duff, critical knowledge impedes creativity by staunchly regulating the creations of the imagination; it is the stifling of the imagination that is the greatest hindrance to poetic genius. Beattie’s depictions of Edwin in nature and the development of his poetic mind before the introduction of the Hermit are reminiscent of Edward Young’s theory of genius in Conjectures on Original Composition.¹⁶² According to Young, “genius is knowledge innate, and quite our own” while formal education “sets us above the low, and illiterate; [genius sets us] above the learned, and polite.”¹⁶³ In his theory Young strongly insinuates that formal education cannot improve upon genius, “for genius is from heaven, learning from man.”¹⁶⁴ The characteristics of Edwin explored in Book I, and the disillusionment that results from Edwin’s education by the Hermit in Book II, present strong thematic links between the poem and Young’s theory of genius.

Alexander Gerard’s An Essay on Genius (1774) further explores issues concerning genius he introduced in his Essay on Taste. Beattie would most likely have heard the arguments of this treatise before its publication,¹⁶⁵ but the published work would not have been influential until later revisions. Gerard argues that “Genius is properly the faculty of invention; by means of which a man is qualified for making new discoveries in science, or for producing original works of art.”¹⁶⁶ For Gerard it is the degree and quality of this faculty that

¹⁶¹ Duff, 295.

¹⁶² For more on the influence of Young’s theory of genius on Beattie’s early poetry see p. 18.

¹⁶³ Both quotations taken from Young, 17.

¹⁶⁴ Young, 17.

¹⁶⁵ Gerard gave nineteen discourses to the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen and “probably all of them concerned the subject of genius, though we lack information about three of them.” H. Lewis Ulman ed., The Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society (Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP, 1990) 36.

¹⁶⁶ Alexander Gerard, An Essay on Genius (London: Straham; Edinburgh: Creech, 1774) 9.

separate levels of genius and the originality of works both in science and the arts. The Minstrel also explores an element of genius pivotal to Gerard's argument; the role and significance of the imagination in the act of poetic creation.

The imagination "does not, like memory, professedly copy its ideas from preceding perceptions of sense, nor refer them to any prior archetypes. It exhibits them as independent existences produced by itself."¹⁶⁷ According to Gerard, the imagination processes sensory knowledge to create something wholly independent from the original sensation. Beattie illustrates this creative power in his depictions of Edwin's exploration of the natural world, and the dream vision initiated by the tales he hears from his mother. Gerard does not agree with Duff's assertion that knowledge dulls the edge of genius. He argues: "If fancy were left entirely to itself, it would run into wild caprice and extravagance, unworthy to be called invention."¹⁶⁸ For Gerard, then, knowledge tempers the imagination and enables it to function properly within the mind, allotting it a much more positive function than Duff-or Beattie-will allow.

This conflicting view of knowledge and its effect upon the imagination provides an interesting context for Edwin's education by the Hermit in Book II. He champions the value of knowledge and seeks to improve Edwin by sharing it, in order to enable him to engage intelligently with the world around him. The Minstrel hints that Edwin himself does not share the Hermit's approval of knowledge, because it complicates his initially simple perceptions of the natural world and their power to inspire his imagination. Though initially knowledge benefits his poetry, it also has the capacity to hinder his creativity. This particular aspect of the poem is drawn from Beattie's own experiences as well. He explains this dwindling of his creative impulses early in his career, though he found that his poems were of greater merit:

¹⁶⁷ Gerard, Genius 30.

¹⁶⁸ Gerard, Genius 37.

“Indeed I find Metaphysics have made a very considerable revolution in my poetical faculties; for though I write with equal or perhaps superior accuracy, my ideas occur not half so readily as before.”¹⁶⁹ It is significant that this hindrance of Beattie’s creative impulses by both his duties as a professor and his desire to discredit scepticism and its proponents begins early in his career, because it culminates in the abrupt end of The Minstrel, thus illustrating that his inability to compose new poetry after this work was not a mere whim, but the result of a long struggle between his philosophical duties and his creative imagination.

Beattie engages with many arguments throughout The Minstrel, but the poem’s philosophical investigations are not limited to genius: scepticism, ambition, pleasure, and the sublime, are all integral parts of the poem. The references to scepticism overtly link the poem’s composition with that of the Essay on Truth, and give the poem a didactic tone. In addition, the poetic attacks on sceptics and the philosophical subtext of the poem generally, make a strong connection between the philosophy of Beattie’s prose and that which pervades the poem. Their thematic links highlight that, though Beattie himself would have considered them opposing forces, “The Minstrel cannot be dislocated from the intellectual and emotional demands of forging the Essay on Truth,”¹⁷⁰ as Conrad Brunstrom astutely observes.

¹⁶⁹ Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 2 September 1763. Beattie, Correspondence 2:27-29.

¹⁷⁰ Brunstrom, 31.

The Minstrel; Or, the Progress of Genius: Book I

The poem's textual history is long and is largely complicated by the decisions of nineteenth century editors, whose arbitrary changes to the text further confuse the revisions Beattie made to the poem over the course of his lifetime. The initial two editions of Book I went through the press in 1771, followed by a revised version that was attached to Book II in 1774.¹⁷¹ Both books were significantly revised for Beattie's 1776 volume of poetry, Poems on Several Occasions. The following edition of his poems printed by Dilly in 1779, The Minstrel, in Two Books: With Some Other Poems is the least revised, with the only change made to stanza IV¹⁷² and no changes made to the second book.

The most striking changes Beattie made to the poem for his final poetical volume in 1784, The Minstrel, in Two Books, With Some Other Poems, which he intended to be his final public foray as a poet. The later omissions and additions made to the poem for these editions show both Beattie's meticulous desire for clarity, and his changing attitudes towards particular topics, as well as his desire to control the text to be read in remote posterity. The first publication of Book I in 1771 was anonymous, and its tentative advertisement reinforces the insecurities Beattie felt in presenting the poem to the public, since its composition was initially not driven by a strong desire to publish it. First, the advertisement explains the use of the minstrel as the principal character, since minstrels were not yet highly regarded. Beattie reasons: "A poetical illustration of such a subject seemed to promise variety of amusement, and even some topics of instruction both moral and philosophical."¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ The first edition was a small run, and to meet demand a second was printed: "The sale of *The Minstrel* at London has indeed been very quick...I think therefore that Mr Kincaid should cause a second Edition be printed immediately in London." Beattie to Sir William Forbes 24 April 1771. Beattie, Correspondence 2:138-39.

¹⁷² See Appendix pp. 315-16.

¹⁷³ Beattie, The Minstrel; Or, The Progress of Genius, A Poem, Book the First 2nd ed. (London: Dilly; Edinburgh: Creech, 1771) v.

The advertisement makes reference to the continuation of the poem into more than two books, as well as the independence of the First Book as a poem in its own right: "if the title were altered, and a few phrases struck out that refer to a sequel, it might perhaps be considered as a sort of whole by itself. The incidents that qualify him for his profession, and determine him to enter upon it, will furnish materials for the Books that are to follow."¹⁷⁴ It has been shown that Beattie's commitment to honour this promise faded as the second book progressed with difficulty. The poem opens with a comment on the difficulty of success, building a tone of cynicism towards the modern literary culture into which the poet now embarks. According to the poem, authors are most often left in obscurity, "In life's low vale remote has pined alone, / Then dropt into the grave, unpitied and unknown!" (8-9). The public at large cannot mourn obscure poets, since the public never recognised their talents. These lines echo Thomas Gray's "Elegy" where the speaker ruminates upon the possibility of the unknown potential resting in the graveyard: "Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest, / Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood" (59-60). The inference here is that the poet "hero" of The Minstrel is also amongst these people of unrealised potential. The subject of the poem is not a modern poet, rather an ancient one, whose solitary circumstances develop his poetic imagination; and he is not in pursuit of public praise or worldly wealth. In contrast to a modern poet intent on fame and fortune, the poem turns to the kind of poet Beattie once aspired to be, who possesses the attributes he most values:

Him, who ne'er listen'd to the voice of praise,
The silence of neglect can ne'er appal.
There are, who, deaf to mad ambitions call,
Would shrink to hear the obstreperous call of Fame" (12-15).

¹⁷⁴ Beattie, The Minstrel; Or, The Progress of Genius. A Poem. Book the First 2nd ed. (London: Dilly; Edinburgh: Creech, 1771) v-vi.

In the footsteps of “Retirement” and “The Triumph of Melancholy” ambition is labelled as a negative force that has the potential to harm the soul.¹⁷⁵ Though the poem advocates neglect of public affirmation and material wealth, Beattie’s comments on ambition are not always mirrored by his own career: his early aspirations and pursuit of patronage noted in chapter one reinforce this relationship. The older Beattie, tempered by the world and his own attempts at poetic fame, and traces the growth of his own poetic genius through Edwin. The poem then outlines the character of the poetical genius and portrays a congenial environment for its development, which borders on the didacticism that characterises much of the poem.

These descriptive stanzas went through significant revision in the subsequent editions of the poem. An entire stanza from ’71 is cut from all other editions, probably because it is slightly repetitious: one repetitive passage is the description of Edwin’s humble status: “Life’s slender sustenance his only meed; / ’Twas all he hoped, and all his heart desired” (28-29) perhaps echoes, “Supremely blest, if to their position fall / Health, competence, and peace” (16-17). These two passages reiterate the simple origins of Edwin, and reinforce the absence of materialism which Beattie believed to be essential to a natural poet. The revisions to the poem also remove much of the satire and develop a more sentimental descriptive tone. The conscious culling of satirical material might have been an attempt to reinforce the status of The Minstrel above contemporary satirical imitations of Spenser.

The satirical elements of the poem reinforce its connection with Spenserian imitations. Shenstone’s “The Schoolmistress” began in 1737 as a staunchly satirical poem, but from the first revisions it took on a more pious air, while the poem also utilised pastoral images of nature, which influenced The Minstrel. Beattie’s debt to Shenstone is more than

¹⁷⁵ “Ambition, outside fair! within more foul / Than fellest fiend from Tartarus sprung” (Retirement, 73-74). “Meanwhile the world, Ambition, owns thy sway, / Fame’s loudest trumpet labours in thy praise, / For thee the Muse awakes her sweetest lay” (“Triumph of Melancholy” 145-47). Passages from final volume of 1783.

superficial: in 1762, he composed a comic poem in Spenserian stanza to Sylvester Douglas which was written “in the style and measure of Shenstone’s *Schoolmistress*.”¹⁷⁶ Another important Spenserian model for Beattie was James Thomson’s *The Castle of Indolence* (1748), which is the poet’s earliest personal attempt to shrug off lethargy and contribute to his community through poetry. In very similar fashion, Beattie refers to *The Minstrel* as an attempt to use poetry as an intellectual respite from the demands of study during the composition of the *Essay on Truth*.

An example of Beattie’s satirical culling is the removal of Homer as a model poet.¹⁷⁷ The phrase Beattie uses is reminiscent of *The Castle of Indolence*,¹⁷⁸ which is further evidence of the influence of contemporary Spenserian imitations upon the poem, and Thomson in particular, whom Beattie considered to be one of the greatest Scottish poets. The allusion to Homer also reinforces poetry’s oral origins, and the environment in which such poetry first existed. For subsequent editions Beattie’s reputation has been made, and so further reinforcing his talent becomes superfluous. The final line of the stanza in ’71 is no doubt cut because by the next edition in ’74 he had received a royal pension for his defence of religion in the *Essay on Truth*, and so including this line would not be prudent: “Then courts of Kings can yield, with pensions, posts, and praise” (36). Cutting this line also removes some of the biting satire that is present in the initial two editions of the poem.

Stanza V in ’71, which becomes IV in all other editions, gets edited slightly for the ’74 edition, but is significantly changed between 1776 and 1779; the changes made for the 1779 edition are in the final version of 1784. The first version is satirical in tone, but this tone

¹⁷⁶ Beattie to Sir William Forbes, 15 May 1794. Beattie, *Correspondence* 4:207-79. Also found in M. Forbes, 283.

¹⁷⁷ For complete stanzas and their revisions over the years, see Appendix, p. 315-317.

¹⁷⁸ “Whence, as Dan Homer sings, huge Pleasance grew, / And sweet Oblivion of vile earthly Care; / Fair gladsome waking Thoughts, and joyous Dreams more fair” (l.241-43). James Thomson, *Liberty: The Castle of Indolence and Other Poems*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986).

is removed in later editions: “Fret not thyself, thou man of modern song” (37) becomes, “Fret not yourselves, ye silken sons of pride” (28). The line begins as a critique of specifically modern poets to a more general condemnation of fortune seekers. The ’71 version then illustrates the absurd pursuit of fame and fortune by modern poets, whose goals are no longer altruistic:

Nor violate the plaister of thy hair;
Nor that dainty coat do aught of wrong;
Else how shalt thou to Cesar’s hall repair?
(For ah! no damaged coat can enter there) (38-41).

The revised stanza draws an opposition between the natural poet and the opportunist: “The Muses fortune’s fickle smile deride, / Nor ever bow the knee in Mammon’s fane; / For their delights are with the village train” (30-32). The final couplet illustrates this change sharply, with the ’71 version containing more biting commentary: “But of poor old-fashion’d pilgrim wite, / Whom thou wouldst shun, I ween as most unseemly sight” (44-45). The ’74 version is more philosophical, celebrating the traits of natural poets but does not chastise the others: “The parasite their influence never warms, / Nor him whose sordid soul the love of wealth alarms” (35-36).

The changes between ’74 and ’76 are very few as noted before,¹⁷⁹ but those between ’76 and ’79 are more significant. Stanza IV in ’76 reads:

Fret not yourselves, ye silken sons of pride
That poor Wanderer should inspire my strain
The Muses fortune’s fickle smile deride,
Nor ever bow the knee in Mammon’s fane;

¹⁷⁹ See Appendix, p. 316.

For their delights are with the village-train,
Whom Nature's laws engage, and Nature's charms (28-33).

The tone of the poet's condemnation of material wealth and ambition in this stanza is softened in the '79 version, and the "hero" of the poem is no longer characterised as a "Wanderer" but rather a "Villager":

Fret not thyself, thou glittering child of pride,
That a poor Villager inspires my strain;
With thee let Pageantry and Power abide:
The gentle Muses haunt the sylvan reign;
Where through wild groves at eve the lonely swain
Enraptured roams, to gaze on Nature's charms" (28-33).¹⁸⁰

The marked chastisement of the '76 version has been softened, and Edwin more properly characterised as a "villager" a member of a rural community, rather than a "wanderer" which would be more fitting if Beattie had continued the poem with his swain being forced to leave his home and take up the occupation of wandering minstrel.

This Arcadian scenery is unique to the uncultured antiquity of human life, in which poets are "happily exempted from that tormenting ambition, and those vexatious desires, which trouble the current of modern life, he wanders with a serene, contented heart, through walks and groves consecrated to the muses."¹⁸¹ The poem's condemnation of modern vanity is more pronounced in the '76 version of the stanza, and this revised version is more even handed in its reproach of material wealth. The revised stanza sets the poet and his hero apart from those who would prostitute their poetic genius in order to attain worldly wealth and fame.

¹⁸⁰ See Appendix, pp. 315-16 for the full stanzas.

¹⁸¹ Duff, 271-72.

The poem argues that poetic a genius should not be concerned with modern wealth and success, nor should the poetic genius be seduced by the notion of fame. Beattie argues that the modern poetic genius should be content if the Muse, “vouchsafes a portion of celestial fire; / Nor blame the partial Fates, if they refuse / Th’ imperial banquet, and rich the attire” (56-58). The stanza that follows introduces the delectations that draw modern poets from the path of genius laid out by Duff. The poem asks whether a natural poet could “On the dull couch of Luxury to loll, / Stung with disease, and stupefied with spleen” (66-67). The diction in this passage illustrates the negative impact of luxury and pride on the life of genius, as had many of Beattie’s earlier poems.

The next stanza introduces the untouched rural scenery, and Edwin himself is depicted for the first time. As Beattie’s career progressed, he came to believe in the inevitable failure of the poetic geniuses to express adequately their ideas concerning abstract philosophical questions. Poetry had always been a pastime for Beattie, a pleasant distraction from his responsibilities and intellectual pursuits, as is evident from his first volume of poetry. Duff draws an important distinction between the poetic and philosophic genius, throwing into sharp relief the conflict between reason and imagination within Beattie’s own mind. The imagination is an integral part of the process of discovery, but it operates in a different way in a philosophic genius. The imagination “enables the Philosopher, by its active, vigorous, and exploring power, to conjecture shrewdly, if not to comprehend fully, the various springs which actuate the visible system of Nature and Providence.”¹⁸² Duff also observes that the philosophic genius must have an equal proportion of reason and imagination, because the latter “would be perpetually employed in forming genius indeed, but extravagant theories...and we should be amused with the DREAMS of a ROMANTIC visionary,

¹⁸² Duff, 96.

instead of being instructed in the TRUTHS of SOUND PHILOSOPHY.”¹⁸³ It is interesting to note that Beattie first describes Edwin as a “poetical visionary” to John Gregory in 1768.¹⁸⁴ The poem then moves to the positive effects of nature upon the soul: “These charms shall work thy soul’s eternal health, / And love, and gentleness, and joy impart” (82-83). Yet these “benefits” must be sacrificed “But these thou must renounce, / But these joys must be sacrificed if lust or wealth / E’er win its way to thy corrupted heart” (84-85). This conflict between success and natural wealth is shelved in the narrative but remains within the larger theme. The poem then shifts back to narrative: “Return, my roving Muse, resume thy purpos’d theme” (90). The poem depicts Edwin’s environment, beginning with the shepherd father of the minstrel, and situates him in the primitive Scottish landscape. This is a shepherd, “Whose fires, perchance, in Fairyland might dwell, / Sicilian groves, or vales of Arcady; / But he, I ween, was of the north countrie” (93-95) which Beattie explains to Thomas Percy that in this line he meant the lower borders rather than the highlands.¹⁸⁵ Edwin is introduced in the next stanza, and his character sets him apart from his peers: “And yet poor Edwin was no vulgar boy; / Deep thought oft seem’d to fix his infant eye” (136-37).

This introspective character is further reinforced by Edwin’s inaugural experience in nature, which Beattie based upon his own youthful experiences in the hills of Fordoun. Edwin is depicted in sublime scenery that acts upon his mind: “To deep untrodden groves his footsteps led, / There would he wander wild, till Phoebus’ beam, / Shot from the western cliff, released the weary team” (151-53). This image introduces the kindred relationship with nature the rest of the poem builds, as well as the kind of nature imagery Beattie will

¹⁸³ Duff, 102.

¹⁸⁴ “The first canto is a Description of the childhood of a poetical visionary, in a solitary country.” Beattie to John Gregory, 1 July 1768. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:61-63. Also found in M. Forbes, 56.

¹⁸⁵ “By the words North Country, in the poem, I meant not the northern part of the island, but the southmost part of Scotland; as will appear, if I live to finish the tale, from the action of the third book.” Beattie to Thomas Percy, 4 May 1772. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:168-71.

incorporate throughout the poem. The poem then depicts the sublimity of natural scenes impact upon Edwin's imagination. This relationship is illustrated by his first glimpse of the sea, which comes directly from Beattie's own past- not only his experiences, but his intellectual growth. He relates these forces at a time when his imagination did wander freely, as evidenced by his earliest poetry.¹⁸⁶

Beattie explains his youthful experiences and perceptions in a letter to the Dowager Lady Forbes:

The scenery of a mountainous country, the ocean, the sky, thoughtfulness and retirement, and sometimes melancholy objects and ideas, had charms in my eyes, even when I was a schoolboy; and at a time when I was so far from being able to express, that I did not understand, my own feelings, or perceive the tendency of such pursuits and amusements.¹⁸⁷

This letter reinforces the idea that the poem is Beattie's rehearsal of his own growth from a solitary youth into a mature thinker, whose reason and imagination become conflicting forces as he acquires knowledge. The poem then depicts Beattie's first view of the sea with drama and intensity:

What dreadful pleasure! there to stand sublime,
Like shipwreck'd mariner on desert coast,
And view th' enormous waste of vapour, tost
In billows, lengthening to th' horizon round,
Now scooped in gulfs, with mountains now emboss'd! (183-87).

This stanza evokes the classical image of sublimity from Lucretius: "Pleasant it is, when on the great sea the winds trouble the waters, to gaze from shore upon another's great

¹⁸⁶ The poems of Original Poems and Translations were written in Beattie's late teens/early twenties.

¹⁸⁷ Beattie to the Dowager Lady Forbes, 12 October 1772. Beattie, Correspondence 2:186-88.

tribulation...¹⁸⁸ Edwin takes pleasure in darkness, and storm, because they stir his imagination, and he meditates on those experiences. The sublime in the imagination is created by “a kind of horror...infused into the mind by both natural appearances, and by verbal description.”¹⁸⁹ It also locates the youth amongst powerful natural forces that work upon his mind without guidance.

Edwin’s voice takes over the poem, and we are privy to his private musings. He rehearses many of the topics that Beattie addressed in his early poetry, such as the mutable nature of human beings: “Yet such the destiny of all on earth: / So flourishes and fades majestic man” (217-18). This standard poetic sentiment is revived from many of his earlier poems: for instance, in “Retirement: An Ode” we read, “Soon are the glittering moments o’er, / Soon each gay form decays” (47-48). He then entreats nature to spare humans such a fate, but the vanity of such a request is also clear: “Born on the swift, though silent, wings of Time, / Old age comes on apace to ravage all the clime” (224-25). The poem wistfully hopes that this melancholy can be banished by the promise of eternal life through Christianity.

The afterlife will give all human beings a chance to be reborn into paradise, a chance which is unique to man: “But lofty souls, who look beyond the tomb, / Can smile at Fate, and wonder how they mourn” (228-29). This idea turns from universal to personal in the next stanza, as Edwin ponders his own fate in contrast to nature:

Shall I be left forgotten in the dust,
When Fate, relenting, lets the flowers revive?
Shall nature’s voice, to man alone unjust,
Bid him, though doomed to perish, hope to live? (235-38).

This sentiment appeared in “An Elegy Occasioned by the Death of A Lady” with similar

¹⁸⁸ Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 2.1-3.

¹⁸⁹ Beattie, *Dissertations* 615.

melancholy questioning: "Why spare the weed, and lop the lovely flower! / Why fly shafts in lawless error drivin'! / Is Virtue then no more the care of heav'n!-" (70-72). Beattie answers this question in the final line of the stanza with the promise of the Christian afterlife: "No: Heaven's immortal spring shall yet arrive, / And man's majestic beauty bloom again" (241-42). In The Minstrel there is a confidence in the promise of eternal life that evaded Beattie in his early explorations of the subject.

"An Elegy" attempts to find solace in Christian afterlife but it falters toward the end, and the poem ends with the depiction of mourners over the bier.¹⁹⁰ "Epitaph" labels mankind's need to understand the divine as vain, and its ending alludes to those in paradise with an urgency to be among them.¹⁹¹ The decisiveness and confidence in the promise of Christianity illustrates Beattie's growth as a poet, and his own personal conviction concerning an important tenet of his religion. For Beattie, this kind of conviction is integral to our existence, and an important refutation of scepticism. In the Essay on Truth he argues: "Conviction, and steadiness of principle, is that which gives dignity, uniformity, and spirit, to human conduct, and without which our happiness can neither be lasting nor sincere."¹⁹² Beattie is now able to express confidence in the religious conviction which he was not able to muster in his youth.

¹⁹⁰ The afterlife is praised: "And wings the soul with boundless flights to soar, / Where dangers threat, and fears alarm, no more." (87-88). But the poem ends: "Mix'd with yon drooping Mourners, o'er her bier / In silence shed the sympathetic tear" (96-97).

¹⁹¹ The speaker expresses faith in the divine: "Heaven's hidden ways to trace, for us, how vain! / Heaven's wise decrees, how impious to arraign!" (19-20). And the poem ends: "They liv'd united, and united died; / Happy the friends, whom Death cannot divide!" (25-26).

¹⁹² James Beattie, An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism (London: Thoemmes-Routledge, 1996) 155.

The poem then shifts to the instruction of Edwin by his father, who brings the focus back to a moral and didactic purpose. The father begins with a veiled attack on sceptical philosophy, attacking its desire to understand more than is readily available to man's understanding. The father declares: "'Let man's own sphere (said he) confine his view, / Be man's peculiar work thy sole delight'" (248-49). This denial of ambition is reminiscent of Beattie's earlier attitude toward the subject, as presented in "Ode to Peace"¹⁹³ and Retirement, an Ode."¹⁹⁴ The father urges Edwin to be content with life and his necessity of daily life.

The father's desire for Edwin to refrain from contemplation of abstract ideas, and to focus upon the business of life, is an important tenet of the Essay on Truth, in which Beattie argues that sceptical philosophers distract us from the business of life, because they "infeeble and harass the soul, [and] divert its attention from every thing that can enlarge and improve it ...and disqualify it alike for action, and for useful knowledge."¹⁹⁵ The poem continues with the instruction of basic Christian tenets, such as "Forgive thy foes; and love thy parents dear" (259). After this instruction the speaker depicts Edwin escaping back to scenes of natural beauty and sublimity: "And lo! in the dark east, expanded high, / The rainbow brightens to the setting sun!" (266-67). This image reinforces the power of knowledge to improve the mind's interpretation of objects in nature such as the rainbow. This reference to education enriching the beauty of the rainbow is reminiscent of Akenside's The Pleasures of

Imagination:

Nor ever yet

The melting rainbow's vernal-tinctur'd hues

¹⁹³ Ambition enthalls mankind and leads them to self-destruction and the worst vices: "Illusions vain! Can sacred PEACE reside; / Where sordid gold the breast alarms, / Where cruelty inflames the eye of Pride, / And Grandeur wantons in soft Pleasure's arms!" (109-12).

¹⁹⁴ Ambition breeds melancholy because of its unattainable nature: "For me, no more the path invites / Ambition loves to tread; / No more I climb life's panting heights" (41-43).

¹⁹⁵ Beattie, Essay 492.

To me have shone so pleasing, as when first
 The hand of science pointed out the path
 In which the sun-beams gleaming from the west
 Fall on the watry cloud (103-8).

Knowledge has the potential to enrich the beauties of the world, but it can also remove the mystery and power from occurrences in the natural world. The following stanza foreshadows the disillusionment that occurs as people learn and grow into adulthood and the conflict between innocence and experience. This occurs through Edwin's education from the Hermit in Book II.

The older and more jaded Beattie reflects upon the conflict he felt between his affinity for nature and solitude, and the desire for worldly success and fame: "Yet couldst thou learn, that thus it fares with age, / When pleasure, wealth, or power the bosom warm, / This baffled hope might tame thy manhood's rage / And Disappointment of her string disdain" (271-74).¹⁹⁶ The speaker condemns the worldly concerns that brought Beattie, and will bring Edwin, away from nature's solitude and inspiration: "Perish the lore that deadens young desire! / Pursue, poor imp, th' imaginary charms, / Indulge gay Hope, and Fancy's pleasing fire" (276-78). The imagination enlivened through interactions with nature is curbed by worldly knowledge and ambition, and the speaker laments that this also should be Edwin's fate.

¹⁹⁶ Radcliffe also recognises the connection between Beattie himself and the Hermit, but his idea of their connection differs from mine greatly: "The Hermit, quite as much as Edwin, is James Beattie, who later chose to remain cloistered at Aberdeen rather than accept preferment in Edinburgh or the Anglican Church." David Hill Radcliffe, "The Poetry Professors: Eighteenth-Century Spenserianism and Romantic Concepts of Culture," *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* 5 (2000): 141.

The poem shifts to Edwin's dream vision, to illustrate the processes of his imagination. He dreams of strong noble minstrels and the halls that once made them welcome, poetically presenting the characterisation Percy made of the minstrels in Reliques of Ancient Poetry.¹⁹⁷ First "the long-robed minstrels wake the warbling wire" (305) and then, "With merriment, and song, and timbrels clear, / A troop of dames from myrtle bowers advance" (307-8). The poem rehearses the nobility of minstrels advanced in Percy's essay, and illustrates Edwin's subconscious desire to take his place among them. The dream is broken by the approach of dawn; and the speaker chides the daylight "Fell Chanticleer! who oft hast rest away / My fancied good, and brought substantial ill!" (318-19). The tone of this passage is cynical, because it signalled a return to serious contemplation. The elder poet reflects upon the initial conflict between creations of his imagination and intellectual questions. The speaker's reaction is contrasted by Edwin's: "Even now his eyes with smiles of rapture glow, / As on he wanders through the scenes of morn" (329-30).

For Edwin, the dawn brings more opportunities to explore nature and exercise his imagination, because he is not yet burdened by knowledge, which, as Duff had claimed, will be shown as stifling creative power. The following two stanzas describe the sounds as the people and the landscape awaken to a new day, and begin their work. These ruminations are interrupted by a significant didactic passage, which introduces the philosophical arguments that will occupy much of the poem, and their treatment mirrors that in the Essay on Truth. The speaker turns to the dangers of some philosophical teachings: "Blest be the day I scaped the wrangling crew, / From Pyrrho's maze, and Epicurus' sty; / And held high converse with the godlike few" (356-58).

¹⁹⁷ "Their skill was considered something divine, their persons were deemed sacred, their attendance was solicited by kings, and they were loaded with honours and rewards." "An Essay on the Ancient English Minstrels" Thomas Percy, Reliques of Ancient Poetry 3 vols. (London: Dodsley, 1765) 1:xv.

This passage makes reference to Beattie's early philosophical explorations, which also influenced his poetic development; an example of this influence is the translation from De Rerum Natura.¹⁹⁸ He admonishes these philosophers in terms similar to those in the Essay on Truth:

Hence! Ye, who snare and stupefy the mind,
 Sophists, of beauty, virtue, joy, the bane!
 Greedy and fell, though impotent and blind,
 Who spread your filthy nets in Truth's fair fane" (361-64).

Clearly, "The Minstrel has harsh words for those who delimit the scope of experience with their close metaphysical formulae."¹⁹⁹ To combat the negative effects of this philosophy the speaker seeks strength from the spirits of previous poets, "Whose song, sublimely sweet, serenely gay, / Amus'd my childhood, and inform'd my youth. / O let your spirit still my bosom sooth" (372-74). Beattie himself pays homage to the poets who inspired his earliest musings, and attempts to guard himself from sceptical philosophy by invoking their memory.

The poem then centres again on the narrative of the swain, whose interactions with poetry inspire the same sublimity experienced by a younger Beattie. Edwin's knowledge of poetry comes through the oral tradition, "Her legend when the Beldame 'gan impart, / Or chant the old heroic ditty o'er, / Wonder and joy ran thrilling to his heart" (385-87). The emotions these lays evoke lead Edwin to question the motives of the characters, and the philosophy behind human choices, as well as the nature of the human condition. After the rehearsal of the "babes in the wood" ballad Edwin questions the lusting of humans after worldly wealth: "But why should gold man's feeble mind decay, / And Innocence thus die by doom severe?" (417-18). This curiosity will lead Edwin to his instruction by the Hermit.

¹⁹⁸ One of his earliest poems of course, had been a translation of the Invocation of Venus from the First Book of De Rerum Natura. See pp. 18-19.

¹⁹⁹ Brunstrom, 28.

The poem does not turn to exploring these questions, but shifts back to the speaker's nervousness for the future of his swain. It is greed and malicious behaviour in the name of greed, which the poem will label as a fault of sceptical philosophy. While the speaker consoles himself with hope for the future and faith, he condemns doubting sceptics: "But dreadful is their doom, whom doubt has driven / To censure Fate, and pious hope forego" (428-29). The poem continues to upbraid sceptical philosophers, who attempt through their industry and investigation to understand the operations of the universe:

Shall the poor gnat with discontent and rage
Exclaim, that Nature hastens to decay
If but a cloud obstruct the solar ray,
If but a momentary shower descend!
Or shall frail man Heaven's dread decree gainsay,
Which bade the series of events extend
Wide through unnumber'd worlds, and ages without end!" (435-41).

Such anger and discontent which the speaker laments is a result of sceptical theory, because it defies the limitations of the human intellect, particularly our ability to understand the wider workings of the universe. The poem argues that in contrast to what the sceptic's argue, our knowledge is far more limited: "One part, one little part, we dimly scan / Through the dark medium of life's feverish dream" (442-43). The sceptics attempt to reach beyond those limitations, by questioning the truthfulness of our senses and intuition. Beattie argues that the existence of the universe is known in the same fashion as the existence of self.

For Beattie, we believe ourselves to exist because we cannot help but believe that we exist; and just as “there is something in my mind which necessarily determines me to this belief, I must also, for the very same reason, believe, that the whole universe (supposed to have had a beginning, proceeds from some cause.”²⁰⁰ This is the explanation he gives for the creation of the universe, and it is also reinforced in verse. The poem demands that we disclaim philosophy “That aims to trace the secrets of the skies: / For thou art but of dust; be humble, and be wise” (449-50).²⁰¹ According to Beattie, sceptics do not acknowledge the limitations inherent in man’s intelligence, and the speaker thus labels scepticism as an arrogant philosophy.

The attack upon sceptical philosophy continues through the movement of the narrative. As Edwin grows and his experiences in nature multiply; he is still unaware of intellectual concerns he is still: “On Fancy’s wing above this vale of tears; / Where dark cold-hearted sceptics, creeping, pore / Through microscope of metaphysic lore” (453-55). Poetry raises Edwin (and the elder Beattie) from the laborious task of dissecting metaphysical philosophy. Nature becomes the chief antidote to such musings, and it is the effect of natural scenes upon the imagination that becomes the focus of the poem: “Fancy a thousand wondrous forms describes / More wildly great than ever pencil drew, / Rocks, torrents, gulfs, and shapes of giant size, / And glittering cliffs on cliffs, and fiery ramparts rise” (474-77). These sublime images are meant to strike the reader with awe, as they do in the cases of both Edwin and the elder Beattie, who is recalling this scene.

²⁰⁰ Beattie, *Essay* 119.

²⁰¹ Many of Beattie’s early poems make a similar claim for humility, such as the elegies in *OPT* and “The Judgement of Paris.” See pp. 42-47 and 63-65.

Solitude and poetic melancholy also inspire Edwin, just as they did young Beattie. In a letter Beattie himself acknowledges his early affinity for such natural scenes: “In my younger days I was much attached to solitude...I wrote Odes to Retirement; and wished to be conducted to its deepest groves, remote from every rude sound, and from every vagrant foot. In a word, I found the most profound solitude the best.”²⁰² Beattie gives Edwin this same affinity for solitude and melancholy, “To the pure soul by Fancy’s fire refined, / Ah what is mirth but turbulence unholy, / When with the charm compared of heavenly melancholy!” (493-5). An indulgence in melancholy and solitude are no longer acceptable to Beattie, though, as is clear from a later passage of the aforementioned letter: “But I have now changed my mind. Those solemn and incessant energies of imagination, which naturally take place in such a state, are fatal to the health and spirits, and tend to make us more and more unfit for the business of life.”²⁰³ In his youth Beattie considered melancholy and solitude essential to an environment conducive for poetic creation, but this letter illustrates that they have considerably fallen in his estimation. Though this letter seems to insinuate that Beattie’s decision to abandon poetry might have been made with less regret than I have previously argued, I believe the letter is evidence of the progressive depression of Beattie’s creative powers, and his desire to eliminate anything that might be hindering the performance of his daily duties. This letter also explicates the crux of the poem; indulgence in the imagination makes it difficult to carry on temporal necessities.

The conflict between reason and imagination is illustrated by Beattie’s own life. The sentiments of the Hermit Edwin meets in Book II are akin to Beattie’s in this letter, which brings into sharp relief the contrast between the youthful Beattie and his older self. The poem then shifts back to an attack on the way sceptical philosophers manipulate language to serve

²⁰² Beattie to Elizabeth Montagu, 26 July 1773. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:226-29.

²⁰³ Beattie to Elizabeth Montagu, 26 July 1773. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:226-29.

their own investigations. For Beattie, these authors have “unhappily been too successful in producing that confusion of thought, and indistinctness of apprehension, in the minds of authors and readers, which are so favourable to error and sophistry.”²⁰⁴ A person who does not understand the positive virtues of solitude and melancholy, “The sophist’s rope of cobwebs he shall twine; / Mope o’er the schoolman’s peevish page; or mourn, / And delve for life, in Mammon’s dirty mine” (501-3). The investigations into nature pursued by Edwin are contrasted with the more methodical and to Beattie’s mind potentially dangerous logical processes, which he defines more explicitly in Book II.

The poem then foreshadows Edwin’s career as a minstrel in prophetic terms: “Song was his favourite and first pursuit. / The wild harp rang to his adventurous hand” (506-7). The final two stanzas reinforce Edwin’s captivation with the natural world and the solitude that inspires his imagination. The last stanza restates important elements of the poem, such as its place in Beattie’s work as a mental respite from philosophical writing: “Here pause, my Gothic lyre, a little while. / The leisure hour is all that thou canst claim” (532-33). The poem states Beattie’s own opinion, that poetry is meant as an intellectual escape from daily life. The poem’s status as a mental escape from more important work is restated, as the speaker dismisses all claims for worldly approval: “At lucre or renown let others aim, / I only wish to please the gentle mind, / Whom nature’s charms inspire, and love of mankind” (538-40).

In light of Beattie’s earlier works it would be easy to dismiss this as mere artistic invention, but in this poem the reference is not artistry. The Minstrel was the last new poem Beattie ever presented to the public, and these lines reaffirm the denial of a career that he never realised. His poetic career culminates in The Minstrel, because it traces his initial inspiration and the fire of his imagination, and through the growth that leads to the inevitable

²⁰⁴ Beattie, Essay 20.

battle with the intellectual faculty, which he will resolve by ending his poetic career and turning his attention to critical and philosophical prose. He traces his own search for poetic fame and the complications such ambition can create in the poet's mind.

The Minstrel; Or, the Progress of Genius: Book II

Book II opens with a restatement of the universal nature of human suffering and eventual death: "All feel th' assault of fortune's fickle gale; / Art, empire, earth itself, to change are doom'd" (5-6). Mutability has been a prevalent topic in Beattie's poetry from the beginning. The speaker then takes up the narrative, but with an air of cynicism: "So I, obsequious to Truth's dread command, / Shall here without reluctance change my lay, / And smite the Gothic lyre with harsher hand" (19-21). The speaker foreshadows the disillusionment that envelopes Edwin after his instruction by the Hermit.

Knowledge has improved his mind but tempered his imagination, and it is the understanding of human history that causes depression and melancholy, dampening his imagination. Radcliffe argues that "to become a poet he [Edwin] must learn to give over village ways and moralize his song."²⁰⁵ This idea is problematic, especially in light of the following passage, in which the speaker laments the loss of youthful belief and ignorant happiness, which Edwin loses through his intellectual awakening. The double-edged nature of knowledge is reminiscent of Gray's "Eton College Ode:" "Yet ah! why should they know their fate? / Since sorrow never comes too late, / And happiness too swiftly flies" (95-97).²⁰⁶ The narrative resumes by depicting a mature Edwin.

²⁰⁵ Radcliffe, "The Poetry Professors: Eighteenth-Century Spenserianism" 138.

²⁰⁶ Thomas Gray, "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" *The Complete Poems of Thomas Gray: English, Latin, and Greek*. Ed. H. W. Starr and J. R. Hendrickson. (Oxford: OUP, 1966)

He no longer contents himself with the nature close to his home, and so he searches within a broader radius for scenes to inspire his imagination even further: "And walks of wider circuit were his choice, / And vales more wild, and mountains more sublime" (48-49). In this scenery the speaker depicts the influence nature has on his imagination: "Sooth'd by the lulling sound of grove and stream, / Romantick visions swarm on Edwin's soul" (77-78). And while thus reposed the swain is roused by the speech of the faraway Hermit, which will spark his curiosity. The Hermit, as I have argued, can be seen as representing the wiser Beattie, who has sought to indulge his poetic imagination, and speaks to his former self the questions he has never been able to answer. The elder Beattie is aware of the conflict between poetic imagination and philosophical explorations, which has been an important theme throughout Beattie's work. The Hermit's speech reveals that he has had experiences similar to Edwin's in the soft scenery of nature, and felt the positive influence of solitude upon the mind: "O Solitude, the man who thee foregoes, / When lucre lures him, or ambition stings, / Shall never know the source whence real grandeur springs" (88-90). The Hermit's speech expresses Beattie's personal ideas concerning solitude, ambition, and material wealth that he began exploring in his first volume of poetry.

The Hermit denounces ambition and worldly success in favour of eternal, Christian benefits:

True dignity is his, whose tranquil mind
 Virtue has raised above the things below;
 Who, every hope and fear to heaven resign'd,
 Shrieks not, though Fortune aim her deadliest blow (100-103).

The idea that the poet should aspire for divine praise rather than worldly wealth has been a key theme throughout Beattie's work, but his own career complicates this notion, because

while his poetry denounced fame, he clearly wanted to be remembered and succeed as a poet, as we have seen in chapter one. The poem then explains that the Hermit once hoped for all of the glories he renounced as damaging to the natural poet.

Here the Hermit is the vehicle through which the elder Beattie can recall past temptations, and confess his own history of ambitious behaviour. The Hermit admits: “‘I sought for glory in the paths of guile; / And fawn’d and smiled, to plunder and betray / Myself betray’d and plundered all the while” (119-21). The Hermit is depicted as the ambitious poetic genius derided in the first Book of the poem, but his seclusion illustrates his abandonment of his ambition. The ignominy the Hermit faces is contrasted with the divine joys experienced by natural poets: “And if no future age shall hear my name, / I lurk the more secure from fortune’s blast, / And with more leisure feed this pious flame” (132-34). The Hermit champions Christian rewards over temporal advantage, and also over posthumous fame, which is traditionally considered a stimulus to noble action.

Then comes a shift in the poem’s subject; the creations of the imagination take centre stage. The sublime creations of the imagination influenced by nature are negative to the mind, because they instil horror, and are damaging to the soul: “But, in the mental world, what chaos drear! / What forms of mournful, loathsome, furious mien!” (177-78). The ability of the sublime to damage the soul is also present in philosophy, which can utilise sublimity when dealing with metaphysics and ethics. It is the capacity of sublimity to cause harm that worries Beattie, and also the Hermit of The Minstrel.

The Hermit warns Edwin of sublimity because it can harm him as a poet, and through him his readers. Akenside had depicted a similar thought of the sublime in “Hymn to Cheerfulness (1745):” “But evil haunts him through the maze: / He sees ten thousand demons rise / To wield the empire of the skies” (120-22).

Morning banishes these scenes from the swain's mind, but the remnants of the emotions linger, as they are described in sublime imagery: "O when shall that Eternal Morn appear, / These dreadful forms to chase, this chaos dark to clear!" (179-80). Edwin internalises these meditations and they lead to the questions he will ask the Hermit regarding the history of the world. The final phrase of the Hermit's speech provokes Edwin to question whether in courtly life and society men betray each other and pervert "Each social instinct, and sublime desire?" (195) to achieve worldly success. The Hermit has planted uncertainty in Edwin's mind, and this leads him to seek out the Hermit, believing: "'Tis he my doubt can clear, perhaps my care dispel" (216). Edwin seeks to avoid doubt, which Beattie labelled as a fundamental characteristic of scepticism. In the Essay on Truth he asserts that "The fundamental principles of truth must therefore rest upon their own evidence, perceived intuitively by the understanding."²⁰⁷

Sceptical philosophy denies such reliance on the a priori and seeks to investigate further into causation and perception, which is one reason Beattie vehemently sought to discredit its approach. It is with the hope of quelling uncertainty that Edwin seeks the Hermit, but the resulting tutorial does not bring resolution. Edwin, then, is seeking to avoid doubt, which for Beattie is a fundamental element of scepticism. Edwin hopes the Hermit will instil in him confidence in the courtly world of man. If this is not the case, the swain implores the Hermit to:

Restore those tranquil days, that saw me still
Well pleased with all, but more with humankind;
When fancy roved through Nature's works at will,
Uncheck'd by cold distrust, and uninform'd of ill" (258-61).

²⁰⁷ Beattie, Essay 146.

Beattie seems to be recalling the loss of his own poetic innocence; through Edwin he depicts his own loss of faith in humanity and the power of nature to improve mankind's situation. The Hermit responds that as yet Edwin knows little of human failings: "Alas, what comfort could thy anguish soothe, / Shouldst thou th' extent of human folly know. / Be ignorance thy choice, where knowledge leads to woe" (268-70). The final line is reminiscent of Gray's "Eton College Ode:" "when ignorance is bliss, / 'Tis folly to be wise" (99-100). Like Gray, Beattie is reflecting on the innocence of childhood and the pain knowledge will inevitably cause minds that were once innocent and free. Unlike Gray's speaker, however, the Hermit feels obliged to share with Edwin the pain and complications that understanding brings. Indeed, the Hermit wishes to have a companion in misery, instead of hiding "From every gentle ear the dreadful truth" (265).

It is supposedly with a desire to improve the world that the Hermit entreats Edwin to return to him for instruction on how to improve his intellect by stifling his imagination: "Come often then; for, haply, in my bower, / Amusement, knowledge, wisdom thou may'st gain: / If I one soul improve, I have not lived in vain" (286-88). This is the elder Beattie attempting to validate his poetic endeavours, and illustrates the desire of the Hermit to educate the young. In *Lamia*²⁰⁸ John Keats articulates this Romantic attitude toward the empirical education of the eighteenth-century, which Beattie was an inextricable part:

Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven;
We know her worth, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.

²⁰⁸ John Keats, *The Complete Poems*. ed. John Barnard 3rd ed. (London: Penguin, 1988) 431.

Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings
 Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
 Empty the haunted air, and gnome'd mine— (II.229-36).

For Keats, knowledge has the potential to destroy the mysteries of nature, and dampens creative impulses. Beattie hints at the consequences of education which Keats laments in this passage.

The Hermit begins his vaticide invoking the muse of history, and the image he presents of virtue is reminiscent to "Ode to Peace": "Here smiling Virtue prompts the patriot's rage, / But lo, ere long, is left alone to mourn, / And languish in the dust, and clasp th' abandon'd urn" (295-97). Beattie added the next stanza in 1784, and it also echoes the "Ode to Peace" by condemning ambition: "Ambition's slippery verge shall mortals tread, / Where ruin's gulph unfathom'd yawns beneath! / Shall life, shall liberty be lost, (he said) / For the vain toys that Pomp and Power bequeath!" (298-300). But these images are not the most important the Hermit will present, for he reasons "To those, whom Nature taught to think and feel, / Heroes, alas! Are things of small concern" (311-12). They inspire the natural poet because they reinforce the vanity of humans, an idea which is also introduced in "The Judgement of Paris," where the hero aligns himself with sensual pleasure rather than virtue, and this choice results in the destruction of an entire civilization.²⁰⁹ These ruminations do not discourage Edwin from his relationship with poetry, and the poem shifts to explore characteristics of the imagination. The Hermit presents education as the necessary moderator of the imagination, so that its creations are enriching to the mind. The danger of the imagination is its ability to make images real, especially images of despair and horror that could harm the soul. It is significant that Beattie also perceived the same danger to the soul

²⁰⁹ The poem explains: "The bower of bliss, the smile of love be thine, / Unlabour'd ease, and leisure's careless dream. / Such be their joys, who bend at Venus' shrine" (513-15)" which leads Paris to chose Her. As a result "With horror's scream the Ilian towers resound" (530) at the fall of Troy.

from the use of the intellect. Beattie condemns sceptical philosophy for this very reason, he argues that sceptical philosophy undermines the foundations of belief, and by extension daily activity.

For Beattie, the imagination, “by its plastic power of inventing new associations of ideas, and of combining them with infinite variety, is enabled to present a creation of its own, to exhibit scenes and objects which never existed in nature.”²¹⁰ The harm that these associations can cause is explicated in a pivotal stanza, which is rich in images depicting the consequences of an unchecked imagination:

And often, where no real ills affright,
Its visionary fiends, and endless train,
Assail with equal or superior might,
And through the throbbing heart, and dizzy brain,
And shivering nerves, shoot stings of more than mortal pain (365-9).

The imagination assigns real qualities to imagined objects, and in so doing confuses reality with the mind’s own creations. The speaker questions the value of these associations, because they are easily turned into negative emotions. The speaker then argues that even a carefully prepared mind cannot completely combat the negative visions the imagination creates, because they mimic the outer world, which is also full of negative forces: “And yet, alas, the real ills of life / Claim the full vigour of a mind prepared, / Prepared for patient, long, laborious strife, / Its guide Experience, and Truth its guard” (371-73). The idea that truth and virtue cannot protect mankind from pain and disaster is essential to Beattie’s overall view of poetry. Negative forces that mingle in the imagination are essential to creation and the growth of the mind:

²¹⁰ Duff, 7.

The poem explores the role of the imagination in this process as well as its unique operations in the minds of poets. Philosophy is then called upon “To curb Imagination’s lawless rage” (399). This line further reinforces Duff’s idea that judgement, which results from knowledge, must govern the products of the imagination. Each discipline is invoked to temper imagination, and this reinforces education’s role in the development of taste and judgement. The speaker argues: “The mind untaught / Is a dark waste, where fiends and tempests howl; / As Phebus to the world, is Science to the Soul” (412-14). This is a significant moment, because it conflicts with the idea that natural poetic genius does not rely on outside influences, other than nature itself. The final simile further illustrates the importance placed upon learning; it brings light and warmth to the mind, enabling it to develop and mature. However, science is also presented by the Hermit as morally active: “Nor less to regulate man’s moral frame / Science exerts her all-composing sway” (469-70). “Science” in the passage is clearly used in its broadest sense here, to mean general knowledge rather than a particular discipline, because it tempers the imagination and allows man to understand the world around him. This understanding of the natural world logically leads to a better understanding of the divine. The Hermit also argues that an intemperate imagination and attachment to solitude are dangerous, because they confuse reality and fiction, and can lead to intense negative emotions, and a dangerous relationship with nature. This attitude toward solitude further illustrates Beattie’s projection of his elder self into the Hermit’s character. Here we see Beattie’s attempt to show through a contradiction between character and doctrine the negative nature of the Hermit’s own message. A Hermit, one might expect, would value disconnection from the community and highly regard the influences of nature upon the imagination, but instead rejects them as seditious to the well trained mind.

The Minstrel succeeds because one is able to present various arguments without one or another becoming the dominant force of the poem. The narrative shifts back to Edwin, and this education by the Hermit leads him to look upon nature differently. But in his mind “The Muse, and her celestial art, / Still claim th’ Enthusiast’s fond and first regard. / From Nature’s beauties variously compared / And variously combined, he learns to frame / Those forms of bright perfection” (516-20) the products of his imagination. Edwin explores the natural world with a more studied eye, and so he tempers his poetry with his newly acquired knowledge of human history and philosophies of the mind. The connection between Edwin and nature has shifted; he now uses nature to aid his own expression, and it becomes one of his poetic devices rather than inspiration. Nature “Tempers his rage: he owns her charm divine, / And clears th’ ambiguous phrase, and lops th’ unwieldy line” (530-1). The influence of nature upon his imagination is now managed by his judgement and taste, which enriches rather than inhibits his creative processes.

The next stanza alludes to the rest of Edwin’s story, which is one of the only allusions in the poem to a possible third book: “Fain would I sing (much yet unsung remains) / What sweet delirium o’er his bosom stole,” (532-33). The speaker then makes clear the development Edwin’s poetry has undergone as a result of his education: “And how his lyre, though rude her first essays, / Now skill’d to sooth, to triumph, to complain” (541-42). Edwin’s judgement is refined by his education by the Hermit, and his governed imagination creates more sophisticated poetry. His mind is enhanced by his newly acquired knowledge, but its far-reaching effects upon the swain are not developed.

The final stanza before the elegy for Dr. Gregory, is Beattie’s final farewell to poetry. His own voice takes over the narrative without question once the poem alludes to his friend’s death. The fable is interrupted by Beattie’s meditations, on his friend and his own future as a

poet: "Adieu, ye lays, that Fancy's flowers adorn, / The soft amusement of the vacant mind! / He sleeps in dust, and all the Muses mourn" (550-52). The grief caused by the death of his friend deadens his imagination, and the poem begins to falter: "Ah, how should I pursue / My theme! To heart-consuming grief resign'd / Here on his recent grave I fix my view, / And pour my bitter tears. Ye flowery lays, adieu!" (555-58). Beattie here makes a conscious choice between his poetic and philosophic leanings. The death of his poetic confidante has left him without the inspiration of his poetic muse.

This rejection of poetry sets up the final stanza of the poem, which is a sort of elegy for Gregory, though it talks more of Beattie's personal loss than any particular virtues of Gregory:

No more thy soothing voice my anguish cheers:

Thy placid eyes with smiles no longer glow,

My hopes to cherish, and allay my fears.

'Tis meet that I should mourn: flow forth afresh my tears" (564-67).

His poetic lament over the loss of Gregory harkens back to Gray's "Sonnet on the Death of Richard West." The speaker of the sonnet reflects upon the indifference of the rest of the world to his immense loss: "My lonely Anguish melts no Heart, but mine; / And in my Breast the imperfect Joys expire. / Yet Morning smiles the busy Race to cheer" (7-9). Beattie's particular poetic expression of grief for Gregory is supported by the correspondence. Gregory was often the first reader of Beattie's poems, and edited many of them before they went to the press. He was one of Beattie's sounding boards, and encouraged him to publish his poems.

It is possible that the loss of Gregory stole from him the desire to compose poetry, especially since this final poem delves so deeply into the poet's own psyche and explores the growth of his mind from his adolescence through middle age.

The Minstrel; Or, The Progress of Genius, represents the climax of Beattie's poetic career. His evolving plan for the composition and publication of the poem presents an integral context to an understanding of his poetic career before and after its commercial and critical success. The simultaneous composition of the poem with Beattie's seminal work of philosophy illustrates the close relationship between the two disciplines in Beattie's mind, as well as in the poem itself.

The Minstrel is also an inaugural investigation into the creative process and the function of the imagination upon the poetically inclined mind. Beattie transforms the usage of the Spenserian stanza, exploiting its richness and versatility to create a unique, sublimely striking environment, which is able to inspire the imagination of his young poet. In the poem Beattie explores uncharted territory, and his efforts in it and the Essay on Truth no doubt left him intellectually and physically drained. The issues he sought to address concerning the effects of the imagination, the consequences of scepticism, and the growth of the poetic career could not be continued into a larger narrative, not because Beattie lacked talent, but because his fable lacked the scope of his philosophical vision. He is the older, experienced poet of Book II, a man whose life experiences have challenged his youthful indulgence in the poetic imagination, and left him with no spark of creative power or ideas to explore. The success of The Minstrel marks a turning point in Beattie's poetic career; he has completed an expansive poetical investigation into philosophical ideas that range from scepticism to the role of poetry, and he has illustrated his ability to instruct and entertain with grace and style.

Chapter 4: The philosophy behind the poetry, the Essay on Truth

An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism

The Essay on Truth (1770), as it is commonly known, brought Beattie national recognition and fame. In recognition of his work, he received a royal pension of £200 per annum, an honorary LL.D. from Oxford, as well as acquaintance with the greatest thinkers of his time. By 1776 six editions of the Essay had been published and it was widely read throughout the rest of the century. Beattie's fame and influence is attested by Boswell in his Life of Johnson: "BOSWELL: Then Hume is not the worse for Beattie's attack? JOHNSON: He is, because Beattie has confuted him."²¹¹ Further evidence of the contemporary influence and popularity of the Essay and its treatment of Hume can be seen in the dictionary of Samuel Johnson. As Howard Weinbrot explains:

The Postscript includes a remark that becomes an illustrative quotation for the second definition of the verb to violate, 'To infringe': 'those reasonings which, by violating common sense, tend to subvert every principle of rational belief, to sap the foundations of truth and science, and to leave the mind exposed to all the horrors of scepticism.'²¹²

The use of Beattie's postscript by Johnson as an illustrative quotation in his dictionary highlights the high level which the arguments and tone of the Essay were applauded by contemporaries. Beattie clearly believed that the philosophies of modern sceptics were not

²¹¹ James Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, revised by L. F. Powell 6 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1934-50) 5: 273-74.

²¹² Howard D. Weinbrot, Aspects of Samuel Johnson: Essays on His Arts, Mind, Afterlife, and Politics (Newark, DE: U. of Delaware P, 2005) 65.

following the course of virtuous investigation, and he considered their deviation from the path he outlines in the Essay as dangerous to the very fabric of society. The postscript contains an interesting explanation/apology for the Essay, while vindicating the intensity of feeling which has been its Achilles heel among modern scholars.²¹³ Beattie explains: "I am not so much addicted to controversy, as ever to enter into any but what I judge to be of very great importance: and into such controversy I cannot, I will not, enter with coldness and unconcern."²¹⁴ It is in fact his lack of objective investigation and heated argumentation that have led modern scholars to discount the importance of the Essay.

In contrast to its contemporary reception, however, modern scholarship has not praised the Essay; even those sympathetic to Beattie have labelled it "not truly a work of philosophy at all, but a polemic, and one with many faults, the worst being bitterness and unfairness to Hume."²¹⁵ I believe this commonly held notion arises from an objective, but not contextual, reading of the Essay. It is my intention to place the arguments and evolution of the Essay within the context of Beattie's growing literary career, and to explore those ideas in it that are important to Beattie's development, and those which had a significant impact upon his fellow Britons. The merits of the Essay as a work of philosophy may possibly be underestimated by modern scholars, but its contemporary influence and success without any doubt present an interesting contrast to the modern dismissal of his arguments.

An investigation into his motivations and intentions, the arguments of the text, contemporary responses to the Essay, as well as its implications for Beattie's career, are essential to a fuller understanding of the text and its place in eighteenth-century thought. Beattie's involvement in the Aberdeen Philosophical Society, or "Wise Club," was an

²¹³ This postscript was first printed in the second (1771) edition of the Essay. For more on this postscript see p. 164.

²¹⁴ Beattie, Essay 568.

²¹⁵ Roger Robinson, introduction, An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism, by James Beattie (London: Thoemmes-Routledge, 1996) vi.

important part of the development of the Essay. Through it he became acquainted with founders of common sense philosophy such as Thomas Reid, George Campbell, and Alexander Gerard, and it presented him with a receptive sounding board for his evolving philosophical ideas.

In a letter to Sir William Forbes, he recounts the event, and introduces his initial motivations for his exposition:

but an accidental question lately furnished me with an hint, which I made the subject of a two hour discourse at our last meeting. I have for some time wished for an opportunity of publishing something relating to the business of my profession, and I think I have now found an opportunity; for the doctrine of my last discourse seems to be of importance.²¹⁶

It is clear that Beattie's initial composition of the Essay began as a discourse to the Philosophical Society, and as his composition progressed he presented a number of discourses that closely relate to the subjects of this work.²¹⁷ Beattie's philosophical arguments are introduced and developed in his lectures on moral philosophy to his students, which present an interesting context for the composition and publication of the Essay.²¹⁸

In some respects the Essay began as a part of Beattie's responsibility to the students in his care, to alert them to the dangerous consequences to society and religion he identified in Hume's sceptical theory. The majority of Beattie's letters during the subsequent four years deal with varying aspects of the Essay, the most significant of these addressing the evolving structure and arguments of the work. In this letter to Forbes, Beattie introduces his initial,

²¹⁶ Beattie to Sir William Forbes, 30 January 1766. Beattie, Correspondence 2:43-44. Also found in W. Forbes, 1:78 and M. Forbes, 42.

²¹⁷ For a comprehensive list of these discourses, see H. Lewis Ulman ed., The Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society: 1758-1773. Aberdeen: Aberdeen U. Press, 1990.

²¹⁸ Relevant excerpts from Beattie's lectures can be found in Appendix, 318-20. The lectures also contain important initial observations upon many of the subjects of Beattie's later essays on the imagination and poetry.

somewhat simplistic plan for the work, and also provides a context for the challenge that he felt he must make to scepticism and its proponents. He begins by outlining his philosophical doctrine, which borrows its foundation from Thomas Reid's An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense (1764).

The ideas expressed by Reid concerning the operation of the senses and the ideas of the mind are integral to an understanding of Beattie's arguments, because he intended his own work to supplement the investigations of his colleague, and specifically to refute sceptical arguments. Reid (also a member of the "Wise Club") deals with each of the five senses and traces their functions to the notion of common sense, which he defines as those ideas:

which the constitution of our nature leads us to believe, and which we are under a necessity to take for granted in the common concern of life, without being able to give a reason for them; these are what we call the principles of common sense; and what is manifestly contrary to them, is what we call absurd.²¹⁹

The Inquiry clearly presents the doctrine of common sense and its function in relation to the five senses, but Beattie did not believe it explained the ways in which the philosophy of common sense disproves sceptical theories.²²⁰ Additionally, Reid's praise of sceptical philosophers, David Hume in particular, worried Beattie. His fears concerning the influence and popularity of sceptical doctrines were intense and very real in his mind. In the early days of his composition Beattie shared his perception of the justness of his attack on scepticism: "The farther I advance, the more thoroughly am I satisfied that my own principles are just,

²¹⁹ Thomas Reid, An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense, ed. Derek R. Brookes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1997) 33.

²²⁰ "My principles, in the main, are not essentially different from Dr Reid's; but they seem to offer a more compendious method of destroying scepticism." Beattie to Sir William Forbes, 30 January 1766. Beattie, Correspondence 2:44. Also found in W. Forbes, 1:78 and M. Forbes, 42.

and that those of Scepticism are false and frivolous.”²²¹ This conviction naturally arises from Beattie’s adherence to the inseparable connection between theology and philosophy. For Beattie and many of his contemporaries:

Ethics and religion were inseparable, because the moral human being reflecting on his own constitution could not but recognize that his benevolent affections and moral sense were the gift of his creator and confirmed that creator’s existence.²²²

In defence of this conviction Beattie argues diligently and at times harshly with the sceptical theories of Hume. Beattie reveals in a letter to Thomas Blacklock his motivation for this harsh treatment of Hume, and his perceptions of Hume’s doctrines: he says he “treated him as a rational, moral and immortal being, a sceptic and an Atheistical writer. My design was, not to make a book full of fashionable phrases and polite expressions, but to undeceive the publick in regard to the merits of the Sceptical philosophy and the pretensions of its abettors.”²²³

It is this conviction of the connection between religion and philosophy which earned The Essay high praise among Beattie’s contemporaries, but has clouded its philosophical arguments among modern readers. Beattie felt scepticism presented a true danger to religion and society, and “he believed that Hume’s high philosophical reputation would allow his anti-religious views to carry the day with those who did not understand his arguments.”²²⁴ Beattie believed his essay to be a vindication of religion and proper moral values in the face of scepticism, and utilised the language he deemed necessary to achieve his purpose.

²²¹ Beattie to Thomas Blacklock 26 December 1767. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:55-58.

²²² Isabel Rivers, Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 1:239.

²²³ Beattie to Thomas Blacklock, 27 May 1770. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:106-9.

²²⁴ Roger Robinson, introduction, An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism, by James Beattie (London: Thoemmes-Routledge, 1996) viii.

In his introduction to the Essay Beattie defends the tone of his treatise: "I must take the liberty to treat this author [Hume] with that plainness, which the cause of truth, the interests of society, and my own conscience require."²²⁵ It is ironic that this treatment, which Beattie believed essential to the influence of the Essay, has partially led to its relative ignominy among modern readers. Indeed, Hume's Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (1748) can be seen as an attempt to explain in clearer language the complex philosophical system he introduced in A Treatise of Human Nature (1739). Hume himself recalls: "Never literary attempt was more unfortunate than my Treatise of Human Nature. It fell dead-born from the press, without reaching such distinction, as even to excite a murmur among the zealots."²²⁶ Though this is of course an exaggeration, David Hume in his Life portrays the Treatise as a work of youthful ambition, which was tempered later in the Enquiry. Hume's seeming discontent with his early work in this excerpt is not as negative as it initially seems.

As Stephen Buckle explains, the borrowing from Pope's "Epilogue to the Satires"²²⁷ provides an interesting context for Hume's attitude toward the Treatise: "So Hume seems to be saying, not merely that the Treatise did not attract a wide readership, but also that this is what one should expect, given its flaws."²²⁸ Some modern scholars point to the Treatise as a youthful convoluted initiation into philosophy, and suggest that with the Enquiry "he attempted to achieve a similarly cultivated form of communication [to that achieved by Joseph Addison] with the broader literary community."²²⁹

²²⁵ Beattie, Essay 12-13.

²²⁶ Ernest Campbell Mossner, The Life of David Hume (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1954) 116.

²²⁷ The line Hume borrows: "All, all but Truth, drops dead born from the Press" Alexander Pope, "Epilogue to the Satires" Dialogue 2, 226. The italics of the line in Hume's narrative support Buckle's argument that Hume knowingly borrows the line.

²²⁸ Stephen Buckle, Hume's Enlightenment Tract: The Unity and Purpose of "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding" (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001) 8.

²²⁹ David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 9.

In the 1777 advertisement to his works, Hume explains “The reason for writing the Enquiry and the other works is there given terms of the lessons the young author learnt from the Treatise’s poor reception.”²³⁰ The content of the Enquiry is very similar to the Treatise, but its ideas are presented in it are more accessible, and therefore, from Beattie’s viewpoint, its content was more insidiously dangerous. The respective merits of the Enquiry and the Treatise are points of contention among modern scholars. One argument stresses the importance of the Treatise as the work of true philosophy, and insists that it eclipses the repackaged popular philosophy of the Enquiry. Buckle, in making a case for the serious study of the Enquiry, discounts the philosophy of the Treatise, arguing that “attending to the Treatise alone easily gave a reader a false impression of the author’s philosophy.”²³¹ He believes the Treatise is valuable to trace “the early history of Hume’s opinions,”²³² but not as a representation of Hume’s philosophical system.

Yet Hume’s contemporaries did not share this predilection for the Enquiry, as evidenced from the fact that serious examination of his doctrines focuses solely upon the arguments of the Treatise, because it was the work which made Hume’s reputation as a serious philosopher. It is significant that nowhere in the Essay does Beattie quote from, or refer to, the Enquiry; he focuses his attention entirely upon Hume’s arguments as presented in the Treatise. Beattie probably recognised the Treatise as the more developed coherent philosophical system, which could win over philosophers and influential thinkers, who would endanger the general public by popularising it. The separation in Hume’s system between theology and philosophy is a glaring example of their differing philosophical outlooks. Hume perceived philosophy as a separate discipline from theology, and “attempted to provide an original analysis of human moral principles that had no connexion with religion, and he

²³⁰ Buckle, 10.

²³¹ Buckle, 11.

²³² Buckle, 11.

regarded this as his most important contribution to philosophy.”²³³

The harshness towards Hume and sceptical philosophy in the Essay is, in part, Beattie’s reaction to both what he saw as the dangerous nature of Hume’s sceptical assertions, and the compliments paid to sceptics by their adversaries.²³⁴ Beattie makes his opinions clear in his initial letter on the subject: “I own it is not without indignation, that I see sceptics and their writings (which are the bane not only of science, but also of virtue) so much in vogue in the present age.”²³⁵ This early vehemence Beattie himself endeavoured to temper in the second edition of the Essay, which contains a long postscript that is meant to justify his strong condemnation of Hume’s doctrines.

The Arguments of the Essay on Truth

Beattie intended the Essay to illuminate the errors of sceptical doctrines through the philosophy of common sense, and in so doing uphold the validity of the idea of truth, illustrating the proper role of philosophy in the process of human life. It is not a philosophical explication of an entire system of thought, but rather a specialised investigation of particular theories advanced by sceptical philosophers. Thomas Reid’s Inquiry establishes the system of common sense regarding the functions of the five senses, and it is likely that Beattie expected his readers to be familiar with its tenets. The Essay on Truth and A Treatise of Human Nature are different kinds of philosophical explication, and so I intend to investigate their

²³³ Rivers, 1:239.

²³⁴ Reid praises sceptical thinkers generally: “They have made many openings that may lead to the discovery of truths which they did not reach, or to the detection of errors to which they were involuntarily intangled.” Reid, 18-19. He also calls Hume: “...undoubtedly one of the most acute metaphysicians that this or any age hath produced.” Reid, 32. Beattie explains his desire “to exhibit our Metaphysical Scepticks in that light in which they ought to be made to appear; but in which none of their professed answerers has ever placed them, namely as the bane of science and the pest of society.” Beattie to Thomas Blacklock, 24 May 1768. Beattie, Correspondence 2:58-60.

²³⁵ Beattie to Sir William Forbes, 30 January 1766. Beattie, Correspondence 2:44. Also found in W. Forbes, 1:78 and M. Forbes, 42.

relationship thematically rather than structurally.

I will explore the main tenets of the Essay in the order in which they arise: the definitions of truth and common sense, the existence of matter and internal sense, memory and the imagination, the definition of belief, cause and effect, liberty and necessity, and the consequences (according to Beattie) of a firm adherence to scepticism. Beattie's definition of truth is an important beginning, since it is the base upon which he will construct the rest of his argument. He declares: "I account That to be truth which the constitution of my nature determines me to believe, and That to be falsehood which the constitution of my nature determines me to disbelieve."²³⁶ Beattie here seems to be arguing that truth is subjective rather than transcendent, but the following passage makes it clear that God has embedded the same test of truth in every subjective mind, because belief is linked with the nature of the universe as created by God: "I say, that I believe them to be true [ie. existence of God]; that is, I conceive them to express something conformable to the nature of things."²³⁷

Though Beattie seems to be dangerously close to scepticism, he further expands on the previous passage by dividing truth into probable and certain, and proposes that they are finite and universal in nature:

Whatever a rational being is determined, by the constitution of his nature, to admit as probable, may be called probable truth; the acknowledgement of it is as universal as rational nature, and will be as permanent. But, in this inquiry, we propose to confine ourselves chiefly to that kind of truth which may be called certain, which enforceth our conviction; and the belief of which, in a sound mind, is not tinctured with doubt or uncertainty.²³⁸

Though Beattie initially argues that personal conviction is paramount to recognition of truth,

²³⁶ Beattie, Essay 29.

²³⁷ Beattie, Essay 27.

²³⁸ Beattie, Essay 30.

which is undoubtedly subjective, he labels personal conviction as a characteristic of the human mind endowed by God, and is therefore both finite, and universal.

This is a key difference between Beattie's common sense and Hume's scepticism; according to Beattie, truth cannot be proved or disproved by philosophical reasoning- it exists simply because it would be against our inherent character to believe otherwise.²³⁹ According to Hume, truth relies upon the individual's experiences, and the verdict lies in his own reasoning faculty. He explains: "After the most accurate and exact of my reasonings, I can give no reason why I shou'd assent to it; and feel nothing but a strong propensity to consider objects strongly in that view, under which they appear."²⁴⁰ Truth in Hume's system becomes a matter of debate within the individual based upon evidence from experience, habit, and the testimony of our senses.

The decision between truth and falsehood "consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the real relations of ideas, or to real existence and matter of fact."²⁴¹ Reality for Hume is solely based upon perceptions, and so the mind's interpretation of these perceptions leads to the assignment of truth or falsehood to a proposition. Beattie and Hume each base their systems upon different definitions of truth, a divergence that is at the heart of their respective philosophies. Beattie's doctrine of common sense is another pillar upon which he will build his arguments in opposition to sceptical philosophy. He defines common sense as "that faculty by which we perceive self-evident truth"²⁴² and as that which comes to the mind "neither from education nor habit, but from nature; acting independently on our will."²⁴³

²³⁹ Beattie argues that "The certainty of some truths, for instance, is perceived intuitively; the certainty of others is perceived, not intuitively, but in consequence of a proof." Beattie, Essay 31.

²⁴⁰ David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978) 65.

²⁴¹ Hume, Treatise 458.

²⁴² Beattie, Essay 31-32.

²⁴³ Beattie, Essay 40.

The refutation of sceptical doctrines in the Essay is based upon this principle as the foundation for understanding and rational thought. This principle, as Beattie defines it, does not easily lend itself to the kind of argumentation and system-building of Hume's Treatise or indeed of Reid's Inquiry. Beattie and Reid's doctrine of common sense was presented within the context of the Scottish philosophical movement to refine and specifically Christianize the moral system first articulated by Lord Shaftesbury in Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times (1711).²⁴⁴ The moral sense according to Shaftesbury, is the part of the mind through "which [we] can reflect on our affections and passions" and in this context he introduces the term 'moral sense' which Hutcheson made central to his own thinking.²⁴⁵ The problematic nature of common sense as a viable philosophical argument should be examined within the context of the Christianisation of Shaftesbury's moral arguments effected by Joseph Butler,²⁴⁶ Francis Hutcheson, Lord Kames,²⁴⁷ and Adam Smith.²⁴⁸ The theory of common sense Beattie explicates in the Essay arises within the context of the Scottish movement to reconcile philosophical enquiry with religious doctrines and beliefs. Beattie does not attempt to recast Hume's doctrine in a form he finds acceptable, but to prove it to be detrimental to society on all counts. His desire to validate the position of his own philosophy within this Scottish context is illustrated in the arguments that follow, the first of them being the question of the existence of matter.

²⁴⁴ Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of. Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, ed. Philip Ayres. 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 1:201-2, 1:214-15.

²⁴⁵ Francis Hutcheson, Philosophical Writings, ed. R. S. Downie (London: Everyman, 1994) xx.

²⁴⁶ In Fifteen Sermons (1729) Butler attributes to humankind conscience and reflection, and articulates the basis of Beattie's ideas of liberty and necessity: See p. 155-56.

²⁴⁷ Lord Kames supports his argument concerning trains of perceptions and ideas by first asking how this could not be, and his statements demonstrate the experience of the senses. Henry Home, Elements of Criticism 3rd ed. (London: Millar; Edinburgh: Kincaid, 1765) 15.

²⁴⁸ In The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759) Smith critiques the arguments of Hutcheson concerning the moral sense and argues that moral sentiment is connected to the perceptions of what is natural and just in society and the natural world. Adam Smith, The Theory of Moral Sentiments, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976) 323-24.

The debate concerning the existence of matter was not new, and Beattie's arguments on the subject are nothing if not conventional. He bases the belief in matter upon the notion that such facts cannot be proved by argument, but are rather based upon the notion of common sense, and so cannot be disputed: "But I cannot prove by argument, that there is such a thing as matter in the world, or even that I myself exist: and yet I know as assuredly, that I do exist, and that there...is a real material world."²⁴⁹ This argument is directed at Berkeley's theory that the existence of matter is dependent upon its being perceived by the senses. Berkeley, in other words, takes Locke's theory of empirical knowledge presented in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1689) to one of its possible logical conclusions, while at the same time deflecting attention from the atheistic suggestions others found in empiricism.²⁵⁰ For Berkeley:

The objects of sense exist only when they are perceived: the trees therefore are in the garden, or chairs in the parlour, no longer than while there is somebody to perceive them. Upon shutting my eyes all the furniture in the room is reduced to nothing, and barely upon opening them is it again created.²⁵¹

His theory seems to deny the physical existence of objects, but he resolves this by arguing that God continually perceives the world, and enables human perception: "The ideas imprinted on the senses by the Author of Nature are called real things: and those excited by the imagination being less regular, vivid and constant, are more properly termed ideas."²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Beattie, Essay 62.

²⁵⁰ In the Essay on Human Understanding Locke refutes the notion of innate or instinctive knowledge and argues that all knowledge is acquired through experience. He also asserts that God would not have created humans with senses able to attain knowledge if knowledge were innate. Berkeley argues that God and the soul exist with certainty even though this cannot be proved by empirical evidence. Paraphrased from Stephen Priest, The British Empiricists: Hobbes to Ayer (London: Penguin, 1990) 53-54, 104.

²⁵¹ George Berkeley, Philosophical Works: Including the Works on Vision, Introduction and notes by M. R. Ayers (London: Dent, 1975) 90.

²⁵² Berkeley, 86.

Beattie specifically refutes Berkley's theories of existence, explaining that "By independent existence, we mean an existence that does not depend on us, nor, so far as we know, on any being, except the creator. BERKELEY, and others, say, that matter exists not but in the minds that perceive it; and consequently depends, in respect of its existence, upon those minds."²⁵³ Despite his negative remarks on Berkeley's system, he treats the philosopher with polite regard, and praises his defence of religion.²⁵⁴ However, Beattie feared the sceptical potential of Berkeley's empirical theory, and with reason, because Hume builds upon Berkeley's theories in his ideas of existence. Hume argues that we arrive at the concept of the existence of objects through our perceptions. He reasons: "the idea of existence must either be deriv'd from a distinct impression, conjoin'd with every perception or object of our thought, or must be the very same idea of the perception or object."²⁵⁵

The conviction of the existence of the object comes from the perception of it by our senses, and the interpretation of those sensations by the mind, which relies upon memory, experience, and custom to give the object a value or category. The function of the memory "is not to preserve the simple ideas, but their order and position."²⁵⁶ It is in this process of identification that the imagination becomes a significant player. The imagination can manipulate the order of these simple ideas, and allow the mind to make connexions that were never present before it. According to Hume, the existence of objects is an idea, not a value inherent in the object itself: "The idea of existence, then, is the very same with the idea of what we conceive to be existent."²⁵⁷ Beattie, on the contrary, argues that the ideas prompted

²⁵³ Beattie, Essay 283.

²⁵⁴ Berkeley's Alciphron: Or The Minute Philosopher (1732) presents scepticism as detrimental, highlights the importance of common sense in reasoning and moral judgement, and vindicates belief in Christianity and its principles. Beattie builds on many of his assertions and presents an interesting context for Berkeley's ideas concerning the purpose of philosophy and the nature of truth. See p. 143.

²⁵⁵ Hume, Treatise 66.

²⁵⁶ Hume, Treatise 9.

²⁵⁷ Hume, Treatise 66.

by the perceptions of our senses are the result of characteristics inherent in the object and do not rely upon our perception of them for their existence: “things are what our external senses represent them.”²⁵⁸ He then restates the argument of Hume and others plainly, but refutes it by stating simply “that is it not in the power, either of wit or of madness, to contrive any conceit more inconsistent, more absurd, or more nonsensical, than this, That the material world hath no existence but in the mind.”²⁵⁹ This case is representative of the kind of refutations found in the Essay. According to Beattie, the existence of matter cannot be proved through argument, and so he cannot argue against Hume’s hypothesis in usual philosophical language. The debate concerning the existence and nature of the soul is another point of difference between the two theories. He asserts that our knowledge of the existence of the soul as distinct from the body is verified by an internal sense, and is innate to our basic understanding of the self.

For Beattie the function of the internal sense is modified from that of his Scottish predecessors, who each in turn modified the function of this faculty. Francis Hutcheson identifies internal senses as “an inward sensation, perception, or consciousness, of all the actions, passions, and modifications, of the mind; by which its own perceptions, judgements, reasonings, affections, feelings, may becomes its object: it knows them and fixes their names.”²⁶⁰ He argues that the internal and the external senses operate in the same general ways: “All our primary and direct ideas or notions are derived from one or other of these sources. But the mind never rests in bare perception; it compares the ideas received, discerns their relations.”²⁶¹ This is a distinction which Beattie does not make; in his system conviction about the ideas of the internal sense does not arise from any external objects, and the interpretation of the data from external senses is not interpreted by an internal sense.

²⁵⁸ Beattie, Essay 64.

²⁵⁹ Beattie, Essay 284.

²⁶⁰ Francis Hutcheson, A System of Moral Philosophy. Ed. Bernard Fabian. Collected Works of Francis Hutcheson 10 vols. (London: Hildesheim, 1969) 5:6.

²⁶¹ Hutcheson, Collected Works 5:6.

For Beattie, the internal sense is the means through which we intuitively perceive unalterable characteristics of our self, such as the existence of the soul.

Gerard multiplies the number of internal senses, and deals with them with regard to the development of taste. For Gerard, the function of the internal senses is to identify “finer and more delicate perceptions, than any which can be properly referred to our external organs.”²⁶² Lord Kames also multiplies the number and function of internal senses, and assigns them each different functions. He explains: “All the objects of internal sense are attributes: witness deliberation, reasoning, resolution, willing, consenting, which are internal actions; as also passions and emotions.”²⁶³ Beattie does not articulate the various internal senses or their functions within the mind. For his purpose, the internal sense is a generic term used to denote that which is perceived through something other than external senses.

An individual’s conviction that he has a soul “could arise from nothing but consciousness, a certain irresistible persuasion, that we have a soul distinct from the body. The evidence of this notion is intuitive; it is the evidence of internal sense.”²⁶⁴ This is directly the opposite of Hume, who does not make a distinction between body and soul as separate elements of human beings,²⁶⁵ and he resolves that “the question concerning the substance of the soul is absolutely unintelligible.”²⁶⁶ The soul cannot be perceived by the external senses, which means that no impression exists that enables us to form an idea of it. This conclusion becomes clear when considered in terms of his assertion that “the existence, therefore, of any being can only be proved by arguments from its cause or its effect; and these arguments are

²⁶² Gerard, *Taste* 1-2.

²⁶³ Kames, 501.

²⁶⁴ Beattie, *Essay* 79.

²⁶⁵ “Bodily pains and pleasures are the source of many passions, both when felt and consider’d by the mind; but arise originally in the soul, or in the body, whichever you please to call it, without any preceding thought or perception.” Hume, *Treatise* 276.

²⁶⁶ Hume, *Treatise* 250.

founded entirely on experience.”²⁶⁷ Since the soul does not have a corporeal existence it is not perceptible by the external senses; and therefore we cannot be certain of its existence or its properties.

Where for Beattie, the soul is recognised intuitively by the internal sense, for Hume intuition is linked with knowledge, and defined as the certainty in the relations that arises from the four relations observable to the senses, these being: resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, and proportions in quantity or number.²⁶⁸ These characteristics are assigned by the mind on the basis of custom and experience, and require no abstract reasoning. He also takes issue with Hume’s assertion that man is “a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.”²⁶⁹ He refutes this idea through the application of the doctrine of common sense: “That our soul exists, and continues through life the same individual being, is a dictate of common sense; a truth which the law of our nature renders it impossible for us to disbelieve.”²⁷⁰ His conclusion attempts to defy refutation by resting upon his definition of truth and his conviction of the validity of common sense.

And this debate concerning the soul then leads him to question Hume’s idea of identity. Beattie believes the same doctrine that upholds the soul also supports the stability and certainty of personal identity without dispute. According to his system “Our identity is perceived by consciousness; but consciousness is as different from identity, as the understanding is different from truth.”²⁷¹ Hume’s arguments concerning identity no doubt appeared impious to Beattie, because Hume does not agree that the self is a constant.

²⁶⁷ David Hume: Enquiries: Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975) 164. Hume’s ideas concerning cause and effect are addressed later in the chapter.

²⁶⁸ Paraphrased from Hume, Treatise 70.

²⁶⁹ Hume, Treatise 252.

²⁷⁰ Beattie, Essay 91.

²⁷¹ Beattie, Essay 84.

This disbelief undermines moral accountability for one's actions, which Beattie believes will lead to immorality and mischief.²⁷² For Hume the self cannot be a permanent fixture, because the idea of self cannot be derived from a sensory impression, which is the basis of all knowledge.²⁷³ For an impression to give rise to the identity of self, "that impression must continue invariably the same, thro' the whole course of our lives; since self is suppos'd to exist after that manner."²⁷⁴ But since every impression is constantly changing and being reassessed by the mind, the self does not exist in a state of permanence.

Beattie is confident that "this very notion of his [Hume's] concerning identity, when fairly stated, is absurd and self-contradictory."²⁷⁵ The vehement attempt Beattie makes to refute Hume's argument attests to the influence he felt it would have, and illustrates once again the limitations of a refutation based upon the doctrine of common sense. The Essay then shifts to a discussion of the role and function of memory. Beattie does not begin by defining memory or outlining its function; instead the Essay operates upon the usual definition of that faculty, and insists upon confident belief in the ideas presented to the mind by memory. The separation between the faculties of memory and the imagination is also clearly made: "Sometimes we doubt, whether in a particular case we exert memory or imagination; and our belief is suspended accordingly: but no sooner do we become conscious, that we remember, than conviction instantly takes place."²⁷⁶ Conviction of the validity of ideas presented by the memory does not arise from reasoning but from the same instinctive property that distinguishes between truth and falsehood.

²⁷² He investigates this idea further in his section on Liberty and Necessity, see pp. 155-58.

²⁷³ See Hume, Treatise 251.

²⁷⁴ Hume, Treatise 251.

²⁷⁵ Beattie, Essay 82.

²⁷⁶ Beattie, Essay 92.

He claims that this conviction is innate to the human mind: “The same Providence which endued us with memory, without any care of ours, endued us also with an instinctive propensity to believe in it, previously to all reasoning and experience.”²⁷⁷ This conviction cannot be proven through reasoned argument, and so Beattie relies upon a number of illustrations of the conviction we place upon the ideas of the memory to support his claim. Hume does not ascribe to the memory the usual function: in his system it is the part of the mind responsible for the order and position of sense impressions. He explains this distinction in simple terms: “The chief exercise of the memory is not to preserve the simple ideas, but their order and position.”²⁷⁸

Memory is also the faculty of the mind that allows humans to perceive a personal identity, because it orders the perceptions and sensations, and enables us to perceive continuance and causation. Once this continuance has instilled in us the idea of personal identity “we can extend the same chain of causes, and consequently the identity of our persons beyond our memory, and can comprehend times...which we have entirely forgot, but suppose in general to have existed.”²⁷⁹ Hume does not ascribe permanence to perceptions, and it is through the memory that our conviction of the continuity of our existence is founded. He also makes an important distinction between memory and the imagination; the former preserves the order of impressions while the latter “is not restrain’d to the same order or form with the original impressions.”²⁸⁰ Whilst the imagination can vary the perceptions and create something wholly new to the mind, this new creation must be based upon a sense impression, and is distinguished from remembered ideas by the comparative dullness of the imagined idea.

²⁷⁷ Beattie, *Essay* 93.

²⁷⁸ Hume, *Treatise* 9.

²⁷⁹ Hume, *Treatise* 262.

²⁸⁰ Hume, *Treatise* 9.

Beattie points out the complications with this doctrine, arguing that it “may sometimes, but cannot always, be true: for ideas of imagination are oft mistaken for objects of sense; ideas of memory never. The former, therefore, must often be more lively than the latter; for, according to Mr. Hume’s own account, all ideas are weaker than impressions.”²⁸¹ Beattie distinguishes memory from imagination in terms of how one operates in relation to the other: “a retrospect to former experience always attends the exertions of memory, but those of imagination are not attended with any such retrospect.”²⁸²

He further asserts that these distinctions are made within the mind without any need of reasoned explanation: “The truth is, that when we remember, we generally know that we remember; when we imagine, we generally know that we imagine: such is our constitution.”²⁸³ According to Beattie, the mind’s ability to distinguish between products of the imagination and of memory comes from an internal sense endowed upon all humans from the time of creation, and the conviction of validity of these impressions does not require any further explanation. Hume links the notion of belief to the division between memory and the imagination, whilst Beattie makes no attempt to define belief as anything more than an intuitive conviction which cannot be explained.

Beattie does not specifically define belief as we have seen, in his system, it results from the intuitive sense and does not rely upon any outside data for validation. Beattie distinguishes belief in the existence of an object from the intensity of the perceptions that arise from that object. He explains that “the vivacity of a perception does not seem necessary to our belief of the existence of the object perceived.”²⁸⁴ Hume, by contrast, explains that the “belief or assent, which always attends the memory and senses, is nothing but the vivacity of

²⁸¹ Beattie, *Essay* 99-100.

²⁸² Beattie, *Essay* 100.

²⁸³ Beattie, *Essay* 101.

²⁸⁴ Beattie, *Essay* 95.

those perceptions they present; and...this alone distinguishes them from the imagination.”²⁸⁵

Hume also links the intensity of a perception with belief in the existence of an object: “belief is a more vivid and intense conception of an idea, proceeding from its relation to a present impression.”²⁸⁶ According to Hume, belief is another word for the conception of the object in the mind as it relates to the first impression, and is marked by its vividness in the mind.

For both philosophers, belief is an idea that has no basis in rational thought or reasoning, and arises from intuitive sense in Beattie’s case, and the vivacity of an idea and its impression for Hume. The relationship between cause and effect is an important part of Hume’s system, but Beattie does not assign it the same power within the mind. Beattie explains the relationship between cause and effect in much the same way as he supposedly despatched Hume’s other arguments. The notion that “every thing beginning to exist proceedeth from some cause”²⁸⁷ initiates his contention with Hume. Beattie agrees with Hume that it cannot be proven but takes issue with the larger element of Hume’s rebuttal: “This maxim therefore he affirms, and I allow, to not be demonstrably certain. But he further affirms, that it is not intuitively certain; in which I cannot agree with him.”²⁸⁸ Beattie intends to refute Hume’s argument that instead of intuitive certainty, this maxim relies upon cause and effect.

Beattie directly challenges this tenet of Hume’s system through the usual method of common sense: “I cannot admit, that all certainty arises from a comparison of ideas...I cannot conceive that any comparison of ideas is necessary to produce these convictions in my mind.”²⁸⁹ Beattie argues his maxim is true because “it is a principle of common sense: we believe it, not because we can give a reason, but because, by the law of our nature, we must

²⁸⁵ Hume, *Treatise* 86.

²⁸⁶ Hume, *Treatise* 103.

²⁸⁷ Beattie, *Essay* 105.

²⁸⁸ Beattie, *Essay* 105.

²⁸⁹ Beattie, *Essay* 106-7.

believe it.”²⁹⁰ In the Enquiry Hume observes cause and effect in terms of the existence of objects: “All reasonings concerning matter of fact seem to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. By means of that relation alone we can go beyond the evidence of our memory and senses.”²⁹¹ Beattie identifies danger in this theory because of its atheistic consequences.

To attribute the relationship between cause and effect to associationism implicitly questions the idea of the first and final cause, which is inevitably God. According to Hume’s assertions, the existence of objects is based upon this relation between cause and effect. Beattie, predictably, does not agree, and argues that conviction in the existence of objects is intuitive certainty rather than an effect from a cause perceived by the mind. This comparison of ideas which Beattie dismisses is integral to Hume’s system, especially as it relates to the functions of the imagination: “there is no relation, which produces a stronger connexion in the fancy, and makes one idea more readily recall another, than the relation of cause and effect betwixt their objects.”²⁹² For Hume, cause and effect is an associating principle that orders impressions and ideas, enabling the mind to form connections between them in both the memory and the imagination. Beattie does not make the same distinctions between the mental faculties, and bases his refutation of Hume’s doctrine upon the foundation of common sense, which cannot be argued with the same logical structure as Hume’s scepticism.

The section concerning liberty and necessity is a large section of the Essay, which is interesting in the context of the intense theological and philosophical debate surrounding the topic. Beattie’s argument on this topic is representative of the pious vehemence he felt necessary to protect religion and morality, which he informally recounts in a letter to Thomas Blacklock:

That I am a free agent, is what I not only believe, but what I judge to be of

²⁹⁰ Beattie, Essay 111.

²⁹¹ Hume, Enquiry 26.

²⁹² Hume, Treatise 11.

such importance that all morality must be founded on it, yea and all religion too. To vindicate the ways of God to man, is not so difficult a thing when we acknowledge human liberty; but on the principles of fatality, it seems to me to be absolutely impossible.²⁹³

This passage illustrates the dangers to religion and morality he perceived in fatalist doctrines. Beattie will attempt to discredit the theory of association presented in David Hartley's Observations on Man (1749). He argues that this theory undermines the idea of man as free agent.²⁹⁴ Hartley explains that the ideas in the mind come from common observations of the senses: "Thus the Names, Smells, Tastes, and tangible Qualities of natural Bodies, suggest their visible Appearances to the Fancy."²⁹⁵ According to Hartley "every Action, or bodily Motion, arises from previous Circumstances, or bodily Motions, already existing in the Brain."²⁹⁶

Hartley then builds upon this account of action and the circumstances that lead to an action or its opposite, and defines free will as "the Power of doing what a Person desires or wills to do...or of resisting the Motives of Sensuality, Ambition, Resentment &c."²⁹⁷ Hartley removes from free will the notion of morality and illustrates that human action is mechanistic in nature. In this section Beattie attempts to illustrate through common sense the absurdity of philosophy that attempts to undermine free will and the inherent ability to distinguish between good and evil actions. Beattie begins by claiming that distinctions between good and evil actions are "as natural to the human constitution, as the faculties of hearing, seeing, and

²⁹³ To Thomas Blacklock, 27 May 1770. Beattie, Correspondence 2:108.

²⁹⁴ Joseph Priestley's positive view of Hartley and his theories of association provide an important intellectual context for his antagonistic view of the Scottish Common Sense philosophies presented in the Examination (1775) which is discussed later in this chapter, pp. 167-74.

²⁹⁵ David Hartley, Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations (Gainesville: Scholars', 1966) 65.

²⁹⁶ Hartley, 501.

²⁹⁷ Hartley, 501.

memory; it is clear, unequivocal, and affecting, as any intimation from any sense external or internal.”²⁹⁸ This natural relationship is attributed by Joseph Butler in Fifteen Sermons (1729) to the conscience, which is also an integral part of human beings. They are endowed with “reflection or conscience, an approbation of some principles or actions, and disapprobation of others.”²⁹⁹ According to Butler any investigation of morals leads to “our obligations to the practice of virtue.”³⁰⁰ Charles Mayne³⁰¹ in the Essay on Consciousness (1728) attributes to consciousness the same power and awareness of choice in any action in its relation to the self: “the Mind, before it exerts its Will or Power of Chusing, knows and is Conscious to it self, that it hath a Power of Choice and Preference.”³⁰²

Beattie picks up this same argument in response to Hume’s assertion that such judgements between vice and virtue are derived from perception, like every other action of the mind.³⁰³ In Hume’s system, “moral good and evil belong only to the actions of the mind, and are deriv’d from our situation with regard to external objects, the relations, from which these moral distinctions arise, must lie only betwixt internal actions, and external objects.”³⁰⁴ The universal and inherent qualities Beattie assigns to morality are not valid in Hume’s system, because “we cannot prove a priori, that these relations, if they really existed and were perciev’d, wou’d be universally forcible and obligatory.”³⁰⁵ Hume’s restriction of morality to the relation between objects and the interpretation of these perceptions within the mind is another example of what Beattie perceived as dangerous in Hume’s system.

²⁹⁸ Beattie, Essay 320.

²⁹⁹ Joseph Butler, Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel: According to the Edition of 1729 (London: Knapton, 1759) 11.

³⁰⁰ Butler, 5.

³⁰¹ Tim Milnes, “On the Authorship of Two Dissertations Concerning Sense and the Imagination. With an Essay on Consciousness,” Notes and Queries (2000): 196-98. Milnes presents compelling evidence that while the work has been attributed to Zachary Mayne, the more likely author is Charles Mayne.

³⁰² Charles Mayne, Two Dissertations Concerning Sense and the Imagination. With an Essay on Consciousness (London: Tonson, 1728) 156-7.

³⁰³ Paraphrased from Hume, Treatise 456.

³⁰⁴ Hume, Treatise 464-65.

³⁰⁵ Hume, Treatise 466.

This doctrine by its very nature undermines moral culpability and the responsibility of the individual. It is within this context of intense fear for religion and society that Beattie harshly attacks this particular part of Hume's doctrine. Beattie believes the free will of every person is undeniable, but "My liberty in these instances I cannot prove by argument; but there is not a truth in geometry of which I am more certain."³⁰⁶ Mayne and Butler each articulate this same idea of personal power and the culpability for actions. For Butler the rule of moral action is dictated by God, because the human conscience is a divine creation. Beattie believes that Hume's doctrine of power attacks this notion of personal culpability as well as morality as a divine creation. For Mayne: "the Mind, in its acts of Willing is free, or does determine itself; and [that] it is not determined, or forced and necessitated, to Will as it does, by the Object or Motive to it."³⁰⁷ Butler also acknowledges the freedom of the mind to determine actions, but he argues that God's morality is the basis upon which human conscience is built.

According to Butler: "A machine is inanimate and passive: but we are agents. Our Constitution is put in our Power. We are changed with it: and therefore are accountable for any disorder or violation of it."³⁰⁸ The use of the term "machine" by Butler is taken up two decades later by La Mettrie in L'Homme Machine (1747), in which he adapts Descartes' theory that animals are machines without souls, and attempts to illustrate the truth of this maxim regarding human beings. In this treatise he also makes an interesting argument concerning the knowledge of human nature philosophers can garner: "Man is a machine constructed in such a way that it is impossible first of all to have a clear idea of it and consequently to define it."³⁰⁹

³⁰⁶ Beattie, Essay 321.

³⁰⁷ Mayne, 205-6.

³⁰⁸ Butler, 9.

³⁰⁹ Julien Offray De La Mettrie, Machine Man and Other Writings, trans. Ann Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 5.

Beattie defines the will through his illustrations as the power of an individual to act or not to act, but according to Hume the will is “nothing but the internal impression we feel and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind.”³¹⁰ According to Hume, the will is not a part of the mind with any power of action, but rather an impression (that is, an emotion- in this case desire) sparked by the movement of a new motion or perception within the body. He argues that all ideas are copied from impressions presented to the mind, and the will is the recognition of such new impressions. Beattie also takes issue with Hume’s argument that we cannot have an idea of power, but neglects many of his opponent’s arguments on the subject.³¹¹ Essentially, Hume’s doctrine is that ideas and emotions arise in the mind from sensory impressions, which are based upon sense perceptions, and since power cannot be perceived by the senses we cannot have an idea of it. For Hume power is merely the ability to perform an act to satisfy desire: “a man has no power, where very considerable motives lie betwixt him and the satisfaction of his desires, and determine him to forbear what he wishes to perform.”³¹² Beattie perceived this notion of power as dangerous to society as a whole, because Hume bases the actions of human beings solely upon the fulfilment of desire, and Beattie perceives this as the elimination of morality and conscience from human action or inaction. Beattie remarks that if Hume can prove his proposition of power true, “he can also prove, that all human discourse is nonsense, all human actions absurdity, and all human compositions (his own not excepted) words without meaning.”³¹³ Once again Beattie does not argue against any of Hume’s statements, instead he illustrates that if Hume were correct in his assessment, all human actions and creations would be meaningless, since they would be the product of desire alone.

³¹⁰ Hume, Treatise 399.

³¹¹ Hume deals with the exercise of power vs. perceived power, sense of power compared with false sensation of liberty, and the idea that power is not based upon free will. Hume, Treatise 311-14.

³¹² Hume, Treatise 312.

³¹³ Beattie, Essay 325.

Hume's proposition concerning power logically leads to his definition of necessity, which he labels as an essential part of causation, and "consequently liberty, by removing necessity, removes also causes, and is the very same thing with chance."³¹⁴ To this proposition Beattie makes the same disavowals, which are based upon the consequences of the application of Hume's system in day-to-day human life. Beattie argues that "we cannot admit this theory of power and causation, without admitting, at the same time, the grossest and most impious absurdities. Is this a sufficient confutation of it? I think it is."³¹⁵ He once again argues that common sense inherently opposes Hume's doctrines, and proceeds by illustrating that his common sense "doctrine hath in all ages been supported by some of the most powerful principles of our nature; by principles which, in the common affairs of life, no man dares suppose to be equivocal or fallacious."³¹⁶ This passage illustrates an important part of what Beattie saw as his philosophical ideals.

For Beattie, philosophy should enrich life and enable humans to understand the workings of God and the universe in a way that will benefit society. He argues that sceptical philosophers do great harm to society because "they want to prove, or to disprove, what I know by instinct to be unquestionably certain."³¹⁷ The purpose which Beattie gives philosophy and his nervousness over the negative consequences of sceptical investigations were shared by Berkeley. This is the crux of the conflict Beattie recognises between scepticism and common sense, which he will develop in his final section that focuses on the consequences of scepticism.

³¹⁴ Hume, *Treatise* 407.

³¹⁵ Beattie, *Essay* 335.

³¹⁶ Beattie, *Essay* 337.

³¹⁷ Beattie, *Essay* 340. See pp. 143-44 regarding the seemingly subjective nature of Beattie's definition of truth.

He also insists that Cartesian doubt,³¹⁸ when employed in practical rather than esoteric matters, is harmful: “Would not the same spirit of doubt and disputation, applied to more familiar instances, transform a philosopher into a madman, and a person of plain sense into an idiot?”³¹⁹ This attack upon the sceptical doctrines leads to the final section of the Essay, which deals with the consequences of metaphysical scepticism.

Beattie’s open attack upon scepticism in this final section undoubtedly contributed to the Essay’s contemporary success, and inevitably to its modern ignominy among modern scholars. The separation between theology and philosophy began “after 1650, [when] everything, no matter how fundamental or deeply rooted, was questioned in the light of philosophical reason and frequently challenged or replaced.”³²⁰ Shaftesbury’s development “of a moral theory grounded in human nature and of a new moral vocabulary”³²¹ further moved philosophy from a religious to secular mode of discourse.

This section of the Essay does not contain reasoned refutation, but rather an emotionally charged defence of what Beattie saw as the purpose of all philosophy: to improve the mind and soul for the day to day operations of life, with forward thinking toward the afterlife. In this section the lack of reasoning and Beattie’s tendency to dismiss the reasoned arguments of sceptics are more pronounced than in the earlier sections. These failings have in part led philosophers to discount the contribution of the rest of the Essay to eighteenth-century philosophy. Whether this attack upon Hume’s sceptical philosophy was warranted or not, it represented an important moment in eighteenth-century philosophy.

³¹⁸ By this I mean Descartes’ method of beginning in doubt, and using logical argument to arrive at conviction.

³¹⁹ Beattie, Essay 290.

³²⁰ David Israel, The Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001) 3.

³²¹ Rivers, 2:15.

In this section, Beattie clearly outlines the insecurities and fears of the establishment regarding the popularisation of sceptical philosophies, which is more intemperate than anywhere else. Beattie reverts back to his ideas concerning the purpose of philosophy, and declares that scepticism does not prepare men for the business of life, which he believes should be its chief end. According to him, sceptics “infeeble and harass the soul, [and] divert its attention from every thing that can enlarge and improve it, give it a disrelish for itself, and for every thing else, and disqualify it alike for action, and for useful knowledge.”³²² He then turns to discount some of the specific sceptical doctrines he has dealt with already in the Essay, relying upon his previous arguments to make his case. He begins with “the doctrine of the non-existence of matter; which no man in his senses was ever capable of believing for a single moment.”³²³ He then moves on to disclaim in strong language the basis of Hume’s system:

That the universe is nothing but a heap of impressions and ideas unperceived by any substance, is another of those profound mysteries, from which we need not apprehend much danger; because it is so perfectly absurd, that no words, but such as imply a contradiction, will express it.³²⁴

Intermingled with these seemingly irrational attacks upon sceptical doctrines is the maxim that informs upon the entirety of the Essay: “Every doctrine is dangerous that tends to discredit the evidence of our senses, external or internal, and to subvert the original instinctive principles of human belief.”³²⁵ This statement no doubt rang true among his conservative contemporaries, and angered those whom he wished to refute.

³²² Beattie, Essay 492.

³²³ Beattie, Essay 517.

³²⁴ Beattie, Essay 517-18.

³²⁵ Beattie, Essay 523.

Edward Stillingfleet in his Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity (1697)

recognised similar danger in Locke's doctrines, and "blamed Locke for giving weapons to the free thinkers, even though they were used in ways Locke had not intended."³²⁶ Beattie also recognised the inadvertent contribution Locke's theory of primary and secondary qualities lends to sceptical thinkers: "Nothing was further from the intention of LOCKE, than to encourage verbal controversy, or advance doctrines favourable to scepticism."³²⁷ Beattie goes on to examine what he believes to be the dangerous elements of Locke's system, specifically the notion of the mind as a blank slate: "That the human mind, previous to education and habit, is as susceptible of any one impression as of any other: a doctrine which, if true, would go near to prove, that truth and virtue are no better than human contrivances."³²⁸

Beattie illustrates the dangerous consequences of specific elements of Locke's system, while insisting upon the value of his work to society and the nobleness of Locke's intentions:

To do good to mankind, by inforcing virtue, illustrating truth, and vindicating liberty, was his sincere purpose: and he did not labour in vain. His writings are to be reckoned among the few books, that have been productive of real utility to mankind.³²⁹

His recognition of Locke's philosophical value illustrates the purpose of philosophy Beattie advocates throughout the Essay. He measures the contributions of Locke's philosophy by its usefulness to society and the virtuous intentions of the man himself. His opposing characterisations of Locke and Hume are telling when examined within the context of Beattie's overarching philosophical vision.

³²⁶ Rivers, 2:27.

³²⁷ Beattie, Essay 257.

³²⁸ Beattie, Essay 258.

³²⁹ Beattie, Essay 257.

Locke is praised because his work (in Beattie's mind generally) benefits society and sprang from noble intentions to enrich human life. Hume is discounted because his system (in Beattie's mind) is dangerous to the very foundations of society and the human constitution generally. For Beattie, the use of Locke's theory by sceptics is an example of the subversive and manipulative nature of that method of inquiry. Beattie no doubt intended his attacks upon sceptical doctrines to be logical results of the arguments in the Essay concerning these topics, but they do as much to harm his case with modern readers as they did to win him fame among his contemporaries.

The postscript he attached to the second (1771) edition of the Essay³³⁰ attempts to soften this attack upon scepticism. It begins by acknowledging sceptical doctrines to be useful in certain contexts: "where it tends to make men well-bred and good-natured, and to rid them of pedantry and petulance, without doing individuals or society any harm, [it] is an excellent thing."³³¹ Beattie tempers his criticism by illustrating the obvious difference between moderate and radical scepticism, which had significant classical foundations. Lucretius, in Book IV of De Rerum Natura had warned against the implications of sceptical reasoning that attempts to refute the evidence of the senses, such as Pyrrhonian scepticism. Pyrrhonian scepticism was indeed held in disrepute by Lucretius, as Creech himself remarks in his notes to his translation of De Rerum Natura. Lucretius himself argues that the sceptical questioning of the senses undermines the tenets that govern every day life, and confound morality. The following passage as translated by Thomas Creech in his 1700 translation illustrates the consequences of allowing abstract reasoning to undermine daily activities:

Tho Reason cannot tell thee, why a Square

³³⁰ This is the edition of the Essay that was owned by both the King and Samuel Johnson: "the K. said he had one copy of it [Essay] at Kew and another in town, and immediately I went and took it down from a shelf: I found it was the second Edition." Walker, London Diary 86. Samuel Johnson's annotated copy is in the British library (pressmark c.60.L.13) Also found in Robinson, introduction to Essay, xxvii.

³³¹ Beattie, Essay 535-36.

Should seem a perfect Round, when seen from far:

Better assign a false, than this pretence

Should overthrow the certainty of Sense,

Question it's truth, rather than that should fall,

On which depends our Safety, Life, our All.³³²

It is possible that Beattie's own conviction in the subversive nature of sceptical inquiry began with this classical reference,³³³ although he did not agree with other tenets of the Epicureans.

Creech's notes present a less temperate view of sceptical investigation. Creech supports the arguments made by Lucretius, which presents an interesting example of opposition to scepticism in the seventeenth century: "Hence they proceed to deny all first Principles, and so are put beyond all possibility of Conviction, for still demanding proof after proof, they must reel on to eternity without satisfaction."³³⁴ Throughout the Essay Beattie labels sceptical doctrines with the same shortcomings Creech articulates, and he attempts to reconcile the arguments scepticism undermines through his doctrine of common sense.

Contemporary Reception of the Essay on Truth

The Essay's reception amongst contemporary readers was in fact the polar opposite of posterity's verdict. The review in the Annual Register for 1771, most probably written by Edmund Burke, praises the strong rebuttal of scepticism: "If he may sometimes be thought too warm, it may be easily forgiven, when his warmth neither hinders him from doing justice to the merits of his adversaries, where they have real merit, nor leads him to any

³³² Lucretius: His Six Books of Epicurean Philosophy: And Manilius: His Five Books, Containing a System of the Ancient Astronomy and Astrology. Together with The Philosophy of the Stoicks, trans. Thomas Creech (London: Booksellers of London and Westminster, 1700) Book IV. 518-23.

³³³ Beattie was introduced to De Rerum Natura in his early youth, see pp. 18-19.

³³⁴ Thomas Creech, notes to Lucretius: His Six Books of Epicurean Philosophy 346.

intemperance of language, unworthy of himself or his subject.”³³⁵ James Fieser comments that Beattie’s friends cautiously attributed the slow response of the Critical Review to the Essay to the influence of Hume’s friends, and their desire for the publication to condemn the work. Fieser speculates that “the delay reflects the journal’s attempt to avoid controversy.”³³⁶ Despite the delay and the possible motivations behind it, the review praises the attitude of the Essay toward scepticism: “The author has also ingeniously investigated the labyrinth of metaphysical sophistry and illusion and irreparably sapped the foundations of the sceptical system of philosophy.”³³⁷ Clearly the Essay had succeeded with its target audience, but its reception amongst friends of David Hume-naturally-was not positive.

The only wholly negative response to the Essay was an anonymous pamphlet: The essay on the nature and immutability of truth, in opposition to sophistry and scepticism, by James Beattie, L.L.D. &c. shewn to be sophistical, and promotive of scepticism and infidelity. With some remarks on priestcraft, subscriptions, and establishments. In a letter to a friend. By a professor of moral philosophy in the college of common-sense.³³⁸ Fieser proposes that the likely author of this pamphlet is Thomas Cogan (1736-1818), a physician and Unitarian minister. Fieser explains that the pamphlet attempts to illustrate the dangerous consequences of Beattie’s common sense in terms of religion and morality.³³⁹ Though the pamphlet argues against Beattie’s philosophy, it is also “hostile towards the clergy, church authority, and religious dogma.”³⁴⁰ Beattie mentions the pamphlet in his London diary in terms that illustrate the work’s seemingly insignificant status: “The monthly Review last month contains a long account of the pamphlet lately published against me, which account is

³³⁵ Annual Register 14 (1771): 353-60. James Fieser, ed., Early Responses to Reid, Oswald, Beattie and Stewart Scottish Common Sense Philosophy: Sources and Origins 5 vols. (Bristol: Thoemmes-Routledge, 2000) 3:131.

³³⁶ Fieser, 3:140.

³³⁷ Critical Review 32 (1771): 453-9.

³³⁸ London: Baker and Galabin, 1773.

³³⁹ Fieser, 3:180.

³⁴⁰ Fieser, 3:181.

favourable to me as I could desire, and indeed favourable enough to the pamphlet too, considering its insignificance.”³⁴¹ Aside from this anonymous pamphlet, few public condemnations of the arguments of the Essay appeared. David Hume himself never responded specifically to the Essay, but exclaimed: “Truth! There is no truth in it; it is a horrible large lie in octavo!”³⁴² Beattie never met Hume either before or after the publication of the Essay, but his letters immediately following its success show a nervousness concerning the state of his reputation in Edinburgh. Reasoned responses to the treatise are varied, the most positive and comprehensive of these being an anonymous verse epistle dedicated to Beattie, with philosophical notes attached, which are intended fully to explain the philosophical arguments outlined in the poem.

A significant philosophical examination of Beattie’s arguments is Joseph Priestley’s An Examination of Dr. Reid’s Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense, Dr. Beattie’s Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, and Dr. Oswald’s Appeal to Common Sense in Behalf of Religion (1774). Priestley examines the three theories of common sense as one collective system. The criticism of the Examination is based upon Priestley’s view of the Scottish philosophy of Common Sense as reactionary and overzealous.³⁴³ The section of the Examination that deals with Beattie is the shortest, and Priestley’s tone towards Beattie is more complimentary than towards Reid or Oswald, but even so he does not treat the arguments of the Essay with much respect.

³⁴¹ Fieser, 3:182.

³⁴² Robinson, introduction to Essay, v.

³⁴³ Paraphrased from Priestley’s Writings on Philosophy, Science, and Politics, ed. John Passmore (London: Macmillan, 1965) 23.

The crux of his argument is that the arguments of these authors (which he links, even though there are significant differences between them) in favour of common sense are inherently false and contradictory. His particular issue with the Essay is Beattie's irreverent treatment of Hume's doctrines and what he calls Beattie's desire to involve himself in a philosophical controversy. Beattie frequently mentions Priestley's work in his letters around this time, and his attitude towards Priestley and his arguments present an interesting context for his drafted response. Beattie comments candidly upon what he believes to be Priestley's personal attack upon him to Elizabeth Montagu in the fall of 1774: "He [Priestley] attacks only the doctrines of the other two; but he is at considerable pains to give the publick a mean opinion of my character; which would indeed be a most hateful composition of ill-breeding, malevolence, and pride, if Dr Priestley's account of it were true."³⁴⁴ Beattie considered Priestley's Examination as a personal affront published by an influential person, and was therefore determined to take public notice of it. In numerous letters he makes this intention known, explaining that "Had his [Priestley's] work been anonymous, I should not have thought it incumbent on me to take notice of it; but as it bears a respectable name, I have resolved...to answer in print."³⁴⁵ Beattie's reason for abandoning this work is unclear, but it is likely that his personal circumstances, coupled with a desire to refrain from involving himself in open antagonism with Priestley, led him to set this refutation aside.

³⁴⁴ Beattie to Elizabeth Montagu, 5 October 1774. Beattie, Correspondence 2:283-88.

³⁴⁵ Beattie to Thomas Blacklock, 4 October 1774. Beattie, Correspondence 2:288-91.

The only response of Beattie's toward Priestley which reached the press was originally a private letter. Priestley wrote a letter to Reid, Beattie, and Oswald explaining his intention to publish a treatise examining their works in turn, and he subsequently printed the response of each of these authors in the Edinburgh Magazine and Review³⁴⁶ along with his own opinion of their characters and their responses to his intentions.³⁴⁷ It is unclear whether Priestley had permission to print these letters, and Beattie's reference to Priestley's publication is not extensive. It is likely that Priestley printed these letters in an attempt to excite interest in his forthcoming book, and to perpetuate the myth of controversy and contention between himself and the authors he criticises in the Examination. Priestley prints the letters to Oswald and Beattie that are meant to inform them of his upcoming publication and inviting them to respond to his arguments, which he sets out in the preface enclosed with each letter.³⁴⁸ Oswald's reply to Priestley's letter demands that the former's remarks not be made public,³⁴⁹ while Beattie's is more temperate in tone. Beattie's reply addresses some of Priestley's particular arguments concerning Beattie's personal beliefs, and some of those which he explicated in the Essay. His letter quotes from Priestley's preface in particular instances, and reveals the points of contention between them.

³⁴⁶ The submission was printed in September 1774 and bears the title: "The Correspondence of Dr Priestley with Dr Oswald and Dr Beattie, relating to the Appeal to Common Sense in behalf of Religion, by the former; and the Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, by the latter."

³⁴⁷ This letter is mentioned in a letter to William Creech on 20 October 1774: "I took but little pains with the letter which I sent to Dr Priestley, and which he has published; ...I kept a copy of it, and made it as concise as possible. There is an error in the printed copy, which I beg you to correct in your next magazine... You have never sent me the Edinburgh Magazine for June. I shall be impatient to see the next one, for the reason you mention." Beattie, Correspondence 2:288-91.

³⁴⁸ These letters are also reprinted in James Fieser's appendix to his Early Responses to Reid, Oswald, Beattie and Stewart 3:376-84.

³⁴⁹ The letter ends: "When you have thought better of the matter, you will not, I presume, chuse to publish the sheet you sent me, in the present form; but, if you do, I shall expect you will do me the justice of publishing this letter along with it. I have declined entering into a controversy, but this I insist on." The Edinburgh Magazine and Review 2 (1774): 635.

Beattie begins by reinforcing his sincere desire to do a service to society through the Essay: “The Essay on Truth is so well intended, and its principles so well founded, that its author can have nothing to fear from the animadversions of a man of science and candour.”³⁵⁰ He then turns to address what he perceives as personal attacks made in the preface, which in his mind reflect misunderstandings of his doctrine by Priestley. Beattie then clarifies his position concerning the nature of religion, which he believes does not deny the ability of reason and the possibility of proof in religion, but establishes a boundary for the reasoning faculty: “My doctrine is only this, that all reasoning terminates in first principles, and that first principles admit not of proof, because reasoning cannot extend in infinitum; and that it is absurd for a man to say, that he disbelieves a first principle, which his conduct shows that he does not disbelieve.”³⁵¹ This passage illustrates the differences in the way each philosopher understands the power and use of the reasoning faculty. The other significant point of contention which Beattie addresses is the definition of common sense.

In the preface common sense is referred to as a new principle, which Beattie denies: “that which I call common sense, is a real part of the human constitution, and as old, and as extensive as human nature.”³⁵² This letter exemplifies the opposing philosophical doctrines which animated both authors, and also illustrates Beattie’s careful attention to Priestley’s preface and his desire to correspond with an opposing philosopher in a polite fashion. Priestley includes his response to this letter from Beattie in this article, which further articulates the former’s desire to appear before the public in polite terms.

³⁵⁰ The Edinburgh Magazine and Review 2 (1774): 636.

³⁵¹ Edinburgh Magazine and Review 2 (1774): 636.

³⁵² Edinburgh Magazine and Review 2 (1774): 637. See pp. 177-80 for a detailed investigation into these opposing views of common sense.

Priestley's reply to Beattie predominantly addresses the fact that they hold similar religious convictions and opposite philosophical ideas, and illustrates Priestley's conscious desire to be considered as a moderate, well-meaning philosopher, rather than a blind adversary to Beattie's particularly popular philosophical ideas. There is only one specific point of contention which Priestley addresses in his reply, and that is the lack of moderation he perceives in Beattie's reply to the preface. Priestley argues for moderation considering the popularity of Beattie's sentiments: "it were to be wished that we might all improve this circumstance into a lesson of mutual moderation; and that it might teach us to think as well as we possibly can of each other, and especially of the moral influence of our respective opinions. To me you appear to have been exceedingly to blame in this respect."³⁵³ Here Priestley is upbraiding Beattie's treatment of Hume, which he addresses particularly in the Examination,³⁵⁴ and it is a charge which Beattie addresses in his unpublished answer to Priestley; but aside from the letter which Priestley published in the Edinburgh Magazine and Review Beattie makes no further attempt to address his opponent's arguments publicly.

Though Beattie never made an intentionally public response, a manuscript bearing the title, Hints for an Answer to Dr Priestley's Remarks on the Essay on Truth, survives in the Beattie Collection at the University of Aberdeen Special Collections Library. The manuscript is not dated, but evidence from the letters places the beginnings of his drafting in late 1774. However, by the summer of 1775, his plan to continue with the project faltered, possibly due to ill health.³⁵⁵ The manuscript contains a rough table of contents with subject headings and page numbers, which highlight the importance he assigned to each of what he believed to be Priestley's important arguments. The text itself is nearly three thousand words in length, and

³⁵³ Edinburgh Magazine and Review vol. 2 (1774): 638.

³⁵⁴ See pp. 168-69.

³⁵⁵ Beattie comments that he believes Priestley's book has received a poor reception. Beattie to James Dun, 11 June 1775. Beattie, Correspondence 2:303-6.

contains a mixture of clearly thought-out prose and sporadic brain-storming style notes. It is clear from the language and the copious amount of empty space that Beattie was still very much in the drafting stage when the project was abandoned.³⁵⁶ This response, while never finished, provides an interesting context for an investigation into Priestley's arguments. The table of contents in the manuscript illustrate which arguments Beattie identified as important in Priestley's work as well as the attention he foresaw each would require in his answer. For my investigation of Priestley's arguments I follow the order which Beattie planned to answer them, because his drafted comments are best dealt with in the context of the arguments which prompted them. The sections deal with: the term common sense, evidence of sense, liberty and necessity, moral obligation, and miscellaneous remarks.

Priestley begins his section on the Essay on Truth by acknowledging the sincere nature of Beattie's attacks upon scepticism in defence of religion, but condemns what he considers to be his impolite and insolent treatment of his adversaries. Priestley specifically condemns Beattie's harsh treatment of David Hume's philosophy, claiming that Beattie is "insolent to those who think differently from himself"³⁵⁷ and ascribes to sceptical philosophers "dangerous and frightful consequences, which they are far from being justly chargeable."³⁵⁸ In a letter to Blacklock, Beattie accuses Priestley of this same disregard for those who disagree with him,³⁵⁹ which informs upon the tone and substance of Beattie's remarks in the manuscript. Priestley also calls the value of the Essay into question, specifically with regard to the learned readership.

³⁵⁶ Because this manuscript has never been properly dealt with by modern scholars, and given its importance to an understanding of Beattie's work, I have included the text in its entirety as transcribed from the original held in Aberdeen. See Appendix 321-26.

³⁵⁷ Joseph Priestley, An Examination of Dr. Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense, Dr. Beattie's An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, and Dr. Oswald's Appeal to Common Sense in Behalf of Religion (London: Johnson, 1775) 115.

³⁵⁸ Priestley, Examination 115.

³⁵⁹ "If you attend only to his assertions, you would take him for the greatest genius that ever appeared upon the earth; so passionate is he in admiring himself and despising his adversaries." Beattie to Thomas Blacklock, 4 October 1774. Beattie, Correspondence 2:281-83.

He argues that the Essay could subvert the cause of religion rather than vindicate it:

“But there is danger lest other persons, of greater penetration, finding that Dr. Beattie argues on fallacious unphilosophical principles, should reject at once, and without farther examination, all that he has built upon them.”³⁶⁰ Beattie particularly responds to this charge in his preliminary remarks: “Well, be it so; if my book has done good even to superficial thinkers, it is still useful.”³⁶¹ Beattie’s tendency to fall back on assertions that cannot be demonstrated argumentatively no doubt led Priestley to his conclusion, and Beattie’s confidence in the validity and necessity of his arguments explains his answer.

Priestley begins his investigation into Beattie’s ideas by questioning his use of the word “sense” in relation to truth. He calls into question Beattie’s use of “sense” for the faculty that perceives truth, because “By this term philosophers in general have hitherto denominated those faculties in consequence of which we are liable to feelings relative to ourselves only.”³⁶² Priestley’s argument overlooks the use of the “moral sense” by many philosophers as the basis of a moral system. Beattie’s extension of the term ‘sense’ to the faculty of discerning truth in Priestley’s view complicates the very definition of truth as a universal, unchangeable characteristic, because the connotations of truth become personal and subjective.³⁶³ The table of contents of Beattie’s manuscript includes a section on the term common sense, but there is nothing drafted on the subject. The definition of truth in the Essay implies that the ability of the individual to distinguish universal truth and falsehood is an integral part of the human constitution. Priestley argues that this definition leads to the relegation of truth to a subjective rather than universal quality.

³⁶⁰ Priestley, Examination 117.

³⁶¹ James Beattie, Hints for an Answer to Dr. Priestley’s Remarks on the Essay on Truth. AUL MS 30/46. Appendix, 321.

³⁶² Priestley, Examination 123.

³⁶³ Paraphrased from Priestley, Examination 124.

Beattie builds his system upon the notion that truth is universal, immutable, and identified through the faculty which he defines as common sense.³⁶⁴ Priestley then investigates Beattie's faith in the evidence of the senses. He argues that Beattie's theories concerning the evidence of sense depend upon belief in the notion of common sense he articulates. According to Priestley:

the same common sense that bids him believe his touch in preference to his sight, and to correct the evidence of sight by that of touch, assures him that touch requires no correction whatever. But this can have weight only with those who have faith in this same common sense.³⁶⁵

In the manuscript Beattie refutes this argument by explaining the evidence of the senses concerning a straight twig dipped in water. He illustrates first that the stick while in water appears crooked to the eyes, but appears straight when seen out of the water. He then explains the necessity for belief in these perceptions and the futility of doubting the validity of belief:

That the visible appearance of the stick in the water is crooked, I do most firmly believe, because I trust my eyes, which are the only proper judges of visible appearance: that the stick is straight I also believe on the evidence of my sight, and of my touch; I see it straight in a pure medium; therefore I believe it to be so—the belief follows the perception immediately. I perceive also by touch that it is straight—and therefore I believe it straight. Were I to doubt my senses, I should neither believe nor disbelieve in either case.³⁶⁶

This illustration is meant to highlight the idea that belief in visible perception arises inherently within the mind, and is not caused by any outside force.

³⁶⁴ See pp. 144-45 for Beattie's definition of common sense.

³⁶⁵ Priestley, *Examination* 144.

³⁶⁶ Beattie, AUL MS 30/46, Appendix 323.

Priestley argues that this conviction in the evidence of the senses arises only from conviction in Beattie's particular brand of common sense. Beattie attempts to illustrate the inherent nature of common sense, thereby refuting Priestley's assertion that conscious faith is essential for its operation. Priestley quotes passages from the section of the Essay dealing with liberty and necessity but does not systematically examine them.³⁶⁷ Priestley paraphrases Beattie's arguments on liberty and necessity in strong language, attempting to illustrate Beattie's philosophical shortcomings. According to Priestley, Beattie begins:

first [by] disclaiming all reasoning about it, then, from his natural ingenuousness, not being able intirely to satisfy himself with this conduct, half hinting at some objections, and subjoining some half answers to them; then acknowledging that the arguments on both sides come at last to appear unanswerable, (p.362) and so reverting to his common sense again....³⁶⁸

This criticism on the building of Beattie's philosophical arguments is not addressed in the manuscript; either Beattie felt it beneath his dignity to respond to such a charge or he had not yet formulated a proper answer to it.

It is this lack of philosophical argumentation, identified by Priestley, that has led modern scholars to discount the importance of Beattie's Essay. Priestley was of course a necessitarian, and attempts to overthrow Beattie's assertion that necessitarianism is inconsistent with the idea of virtue and vice. He begins by arguing that "strictly speaking, the doctrine of necessity would oblige a man to depart from the common language in speaking of

³⁶⁷ He charges Beattie with not arguing his position and also refusing to listen to opposing arguments upon the subject. Priestley, Examination 169. Beattie responds to this charge in his manuscript by referencing 366, 374, and 377 of the Essay on Truth. Beattie, AUL MS 30/46. The manuscript does not specify an edition of the Essay but the pages referred to in the 2nd edition do deal with free will, specifically the arguments of fatalists (366), the dangers of abstract reasoning (374), and ability of some to defend false doctrines with clever language, when the doctrine is inherently false (377).

³⁶⁸ Priestley, Examination 172.

human actions; but this makes no change with respect to his conduct.³⁶⁹ He refers to the doctrine of the sun standing still to prove the validity of this argument. He refers to Copernicus and Newton, who spoke of the sun rising and setting with the same language as that available to an ordinary farmer,³⁷⁰ but their knowledge of the circumstance was far greater. For Priestley, this illustration proves that “it is impossible that, with respect to common life, a necessitarian should have any other ideas to the words praise and blame...than other people have, and he will be influenced as much by them.”³⁷¹

In the manuscript Beattie illustrates the potential of language to be accurate irrespective of the truth of the statement, and therefore to be used to deceive: “Modes of expression therefore which imply that the earth stands still & the sun moves, may be used without the least inconvenience notwithstanding the true system of the universe if now discovered.”³⁷² In this way knowledge does not affect the language used to express particular attributes of the sun or earth. However, Beattie makes an important distinction between an abstract law of science and the notion that individual actions are pre-determined before our existence and eternally out of human power to alter. According to Beattie, the consequences of such a realisation would manifest themselves in a reworking of the language used to express such actions, because they would no longer involve willed affections or inclinations:

But if every man were now to be convinced that necessity is true, that no past action of his life could have been different from what it is, it is certain that a great change must take place in language; because the thoughts of men in regard to what is the object of the daily conversation and meditation...must

³⁶⁹ Priestley, Examination 178.

³⁷⁰ Paraphrased from Priestley, Examination 178.

³⁷¹ Priestley, Examination 178.

³⁷² AUL MS 30/46, Appendix 326.

be totally changed.³⁷³

Clearly Priestley and Beattie adhered to opposing philosophical notions concerning liberty and necessity; each one based upon his own religious convictions. Moral obligation is the next section of Priestley's Examination which Beattie answers in his manuscript, and is the last before the final miscellaneous remarks. Priestley takes issue with Beattie's argument in favour of common sense as the foundation of moral obligation. Priestley argues that Beattie's common sense leads to actions based solely upon internal feelings, which make it "impossible to distinguish the injunctions of a well-informed from those of an ill-informed conscience."³⁷⁴

According to Priestley, the internal nature of Beattie's common sense leads to subjective rather than objective moral imperatives, and this complicates the distinction between moral and immoral actions. In the Hints manuscript, Beattie explains that in the Essay on Truth he attempts to show "that there are first principles in Morals as in other sciences, which are perceived by the light of their own evidence, and carry a degree of conviction along with them which no man supposes fallacious."³⁷⁵ Priestley's criticism assumes that Beattie places common sense as the foundation of moral doctrines, and illustrates the problematic nature of such a relationship. In the manuscript response, Beattie clarifies the position of common sense with regard to morals, which is similar to the arguments in the Essay concerning belief as well as liberty and necessity. These sections are the farthest advanced of any in the manuscript, and their arguments illustrate the beginnings of an adequate answer to Priestley's challenge on this issue.

³⁷³ AUL MS 30/46, Appendix 324.

³⁷⁴ Priestley, Examination 159.

³⁷⁵ AUL MS 30/46, Appendix 325.

Priestley's conclusion to his section on the Essay upbraids Beattie for his verbal abuse of Hume and his voluntary involvement in controversy, and accuses Beattie of falling short of explicating his philosophy of common sense in a manner that would lead to acquiescence. He concludes that "Dr. Beattie's vehemence, and his antipathy to those who differ from him, though he is quite a volunteer in the controversy, and cannot plead that he was heated by any personal opposition, approaches too near to the spirit of persecution."³⁷⁶ Beattie restates in his preliminary remarks that "Mr Hume's writings have done great harm to society (whatever pleasure Dr P. make take in them)—& the Essay on Truth has been so fortunate as in some considerable degree to counteract their pernicious influence."³⁷⁷ He makes no apology for his strong language against Hume's theory in the Essay, since he deemed it justified given the danger to religion posed by Hume's system.

He then remarks particularly upon Priestley's indictment of him as a man addicted to controversy and discontent:

I disclaim all ambition of being thought a suitable disputant, that I never took pleasure in an [confrontation], and have [not] once made controversy my study; I aim at no paradoxes, and would not wish to say any thing in the evidence of Truth but what has often occasioned to in common sense of mankind.³⁷⁸

Priestley's Examination highlights some of problematic consequences of Beattie's proposed doctrine, and presents the only reasoned critical assessment of the Essay among contemporary philosophers.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ Priestley, Examination 192.

³⁷⁷ AUL MS. 30/46, Appendix 321.

³⁷⁸ AUL MS. 30/46, Appendix 321.

³⁷⁹ There were numerous negative pamphlets written on the Essay, but their criticism was not reasoned philosophy in the same manner as Priestley's, and they were all published anonymously. Paraphrased from Robinson, introduction to Essay, xxxi-ii.

Indeed, Priestley's reputation as a gentleman and learned scholar prompted Beattie to action in a way an anonymous publication would not have done. He considered the entire school of common sense to be a conservative reaction to sceptical doctrines, and his treatment of the arguments in the Essay illustrates his own particular philosophical inclinations. Beattie's letters prove the attention he paid to the work and his sense of ill treatment by Priestley in his drafted response. Priestley's criticism prompted Beattie to recast some of the essential elements of the Essay into a new form, but he never completed his Hints. The incomplete manuscript provides interesting answers to what Beattie recognised as the crucial criticisms made by Priestley and presents modern scholars with a new avenue of investigation into the theories of both philosophers.

A significant positive response to the Essay is The Fall of Scepticism and Infidelity Predicted; An Epistle to Dr. Beattie, Occasioned by His Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth. To which are subjoined by way of notes, Dissertations on several metaphysical and religious subjects (1785). It is an interesting response to the Essay because it is a verse epistle as well as philosophical treatise, and includes two postscripts which discuss the philosophy of Joseph Priestley. While the work bears no name, it is attributed to William Cockin (1736-1801) a writing master at Lancaster Grammar school.³⁸⁰ Cockin is characterised as a man of literary tastes and a metaphysical writer, and his works include another anonymous philosophical treatise, which deals particularly with Joseph Priestley and his ideas concerning free will.³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ John Romney, Memoirs of George Romney (London: Baldwin, 1830) lists The Fall of Scepticism as one of Cockin's most important works of poetry and philosophy.

³⁸¹ The Freedom of Human Action Explained and Vindicated; In which the Opinions of Dr. Priestley on the Subject are Particularly Considered (London: Nicol, 1791).

Biographical information concerning William Cockin is available primarily through his connection with painter George Romney, because his poetical and philosophical works have received little critical attention. The epistle and notes present an interesting response to Beattie's Essay, because he praises Beattie in poetry but defends his doctrines in philosophical prose. In the first postscript he is the champion of Reid, Beattie, and Oswald, and takes up their defence against the attacks made by Priestley, since neither Reid nor Beattie engaged in the sought after philosophical controversy that Priestley perhaps wished to generate.³⁸²

Cockin presents himself as the champion of those who defend religion and society against what he perceived to be the un-Christian philosophical antagonism of Priestley, since the authors Priestley addresses in his Examination refused to engage in controversy. There is no mention of the epistle or its author in Beattie's letters or day-book, and as it was published anonymously it is unclear whether Beattie had any knowledge of it. In the preface the poet explains that the majority of the epistle was written in 1775, though it was first published ten years later. This delay, the author explains, was due to an imperfection in the explanatory notes, and his desire to add to them upon the publication of Priestley's Examination.

The topics of the notes which Cockin attaches to this epistle are predominately theological in subject,³⁸³ but the first topic mentioned in the postscript is entitled: "Remarks on Dr. Priestley's Examination of Drs. Reid, Beattie, and Oswald" in which he defends their philosophies in an interesting fashion.³⁸⁴ The poet hopes that his epistle and notes will serve "to caution the young adventurer in philosophy against the dangerous impositions of

³⁸² James Somerville argues: "Priestley evidently hoped that some of Beattie's fame might be deflected on to himself by entering into a protracted controversy with him." James Somerville, The Enigmatic Parting Shot: What was Hume's 'Compleat Answer to Dr Reid and to That Bigotted Silly Fellow, Beattie?' (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995) 245.

³⁸³ Topics include but are not limited to: "On the Being of a God," "On the Necessity of a Revelation," "On the Efficacy of Faith," "What at present most prevents the progress of religion." Cockin, xi.

³⁸⁴ This postscript is dealt with later in the chapter, see pp. 184-86.

metaphysical subtlety—and to impress on his mind a favourable idea of our most holy religion.”³⁸⁵ The author clearly introduces himself as a protector of youthful minds, and so his motivations for publication are similar to Beattie’s own concerning the Essay on Truth.³⁸⁶ Cockin presents his work as a reasoned defence of the arguments made against scepticism by common sense philosophers.

The opening of the poem situates Beattie’s Essay in terms of its ability to thwart the progress of scepticism, and praises his work because it served “To check some potent evil’s drear career” (8). The speaker then celebrates Beattie and his defence of religion against sceptical doctrines in clear terms:

Such, BEATTIE, thy fair volume, such the meed
Thy worth demands, and virtue has decreed;
A work, where, mix’d with all the charms of art,
We feel the influence of the purest heart (11-14).

The epistle pays tribute to Beattie’s motives, as well as the diverse abilities displayed in The Minstrel and the Essay on Truth, while imploring him to continue to work in the cause of truth, and turn from fanciful poetry:

A stranger Muse attunes her humble lyre,
And asks thy ear to what thy themes inspire.
Bold the request! Yet should the trivial strain
From nobler views thy active mind detain;
Though new ESSAYS a while forget their foes,
And other MINSTRELS from fresh plaudits pause (27-32).

³⁸⁵ William Cockin, The Fall of Scepticism and Infidelity Predicted; An Epistle to Dr. Beattie. Occasioned by His Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth. To Which are subjoined by way of notes, Dissertations on several metaphysical and religious subjects (London: Cadell, 1785) vii.

³⁸⁶ See pp. 135-36.

The poem then shifts to an image of an untaught youth whose mind is a victim of scepticism, and in his mind: "One thing another seems, and woods and hills / Are clouds or hamlets, just as Fancy wills" (47-48). The ability of the imagination to alter reality is further bemoaned, because it can lead to a perversion of reason: "Some phantom dread usurps fair Reasons throne; / His judgement farther swerves, till by degrees / A goblin frowns in ev'ry bush he sees" (50-52).

According to the speaker, it is within this context that scepticism is able to take hold of the mind, and the consequences of this domination are dangerous to society because they lead the distrust of commonly held maxims. Sophistry and the claims of philosophers "Have been believ'd, where creeds and axioms plain / Met nought but cavil, or disavow'd disdain" (75-76). The poem upholds Beattie's Essay as an antidote to the blind adherence to scepticism, which, says Cockin, involves quibbling about terminology, and manipulating language for pointless or nefarious philosophical ends: "Truth still is Truth, and man may find it out; / At least what's useful,—hence the sacred ray, / Which shews life's goal, and light's us on the way" (98-100). The poem goes on to lament the current climate in Britain, where a positive reception is given to sceptical doctrines with all the confidence that characterises those who believe themselves to be on the side of "progress." The poem argues that religion is the balm to be applied to the wounds inflicted upon society by its acquiescence in the doctrines and implications of sceptical reasoning. The speaker turns to religion as the only possible solution to the problem of scepticism:

RELIGION! Heavn'ly gift! the wise man's theme,
Afflictions solace, and our good supreme,
The needful guide, where Reason's glimmr'ing light
But little shews, nor oft that little right (263-66).

The poem argues that it is through religion and the work of philosophers such as Beattie that a new golden age will be ushered in to Britain, is articulated through sylvan images, because in a rural setting sceptical doctrines seem out of place and ludicrous: “In simplest guise the rural manners reign; / Pride has no sanction, and, as Virtue’s trade, / Man wields his old primeval crook and spade” (335-37). This scene does not stimulate sceptical thoughts, and the poem depicts a future which is characterized by virtue free from scepticism.

The poem then upbraids particular sceptical philosophers and wishes them absent from the newly created golden age, and they are banished from this newly created world. Their doctrines, meanwhile, are treated with public condemnation rather than approbation: “But still, as public pests, to public shame / Coercive manners give each baneful name” (378-79). The final verse paragraph is another rehearsal of the bliss that will accompany a world free of sceptical philosophers and doctrines, a world depicted with an image of piety, in this new society: “The Christian virtues gain the first regard; / All Reason’s friends her genuine æra see, / Nor think on TRUTH, but still remember THEE” (387-89). The final lines of the poem depict the innate belief that is the basis of common sense philosophy. In a world devoid of sceptical philosophies there is no need to defend the innate sense of truth, because it is not questioned. As we have seen, not all of the responses to the Essay were as positive as the reviews and The Fall of Scepticism and Infidelity Predicted, but it represents the kind of positive reception which greeted the Essay in the 1770’s.

Though Beattie’s response to Priestley’s attack remained unfinished, William Cockin’s first postscript to The Fall of Scepticism attempts to vindicate the philosophy of common sense articulated by Reid, Beattie and Oswald. Beattie makes no mention of this publication in any of his letters or his private day-books, but it seems unlikely that the publication would have entirely escaped his notice. It is more probable that he declined to pay

any attention to it given his staunch position against engaging openly in a philosophical controversy after the Essay on Truth. The “Remarks on Dr. Priestley’s Examination of the Drs Reid, Beattie, and Oswald” is not a fully developed philosophical defence, but consists of a superficial gloss of the context in which common sense philosophy became necessary, an explanation of its main tenets, and a warm harangue against Priestley’s treatment of the three philosophers, as well as their proposed systems. Cockin focuses on what he believes to be Priestley’s misconceptions and ill-founded arguments against their doctrines, and defends them by explicating their doctrines and questioning Priestley’s motivations. Cockin’s postscript is an interesting engagement with Priestley’s Examination, and represents the kind of response his criticisms would have received from contemporary adherents to the doctrines of the Essay on Truth.

Cockin begins with the philosophical context into which common sense was introduced, intending to justify the philosophical writings of Beattie, Reid and Oswald. These philosophers introduced common sense into a philosophical climate in which the Lockean system, which relies upon the acquisition of ideas and impressions through the senses, leads many “to adopt the selfish scheme of morals; and his [Locke] disciples to contend (with Des Cartes and Malebranche) that we ought to believe nothing without being compelled to it by the most scrupulous investigation.”³⁸⁷ He supports Beattie’s assertion that Locke’s system inadvertently became “the prolific parent of paradox and scepticism; and that it ultimately tended to destroy all belief, even in the most obvious certainties of common sense.”³⁸⁸ Cockin argues that this misappropriation of Locke is solved by the authors he defends, and turns to the arguments Priestley makes against them in his Examination. He begins by arguing that

³⁸⁷ Cockin, 114.

³⁸⁸ Cockin, 114.

Priestley's criticisms "rise either from misconception or misrepresentation"³⁸⁹ and begins with Priestley's assertion that the arguments made by common sense philosophers misunderstand the use of the reasoning faculty. He argues that Priestley "labours to make it appear, that their doctrines are unfriendly to all proper reasoning; that the common sense they contend for is but another name for opinion or fancy"³⁹⁰ which he refutes by defining common sense and its relation to reason in a similar way to both Reid and Beattie.³⁹¹ He continues the defence by explaining the authors' systems as an element "of the mental frame, overlooked by Locke and his followers"³⁹² to situate common sense as an antidote to an element of the mind overlooked by Locke rather than a refutation of his theory. Having illustrated the general tenets of common sense, Cockin turns to some of Priestley's arguments in the Examination, such as the danger these arguments pose to religion.

Cockin argues that "our examiner pretends likewise to fear the evidences of revelation will suffer from these new and offensive principles."³⁹³ Cockin makes no reasoned argument against this assertion, but that which Beattie makes in the Essay,³⁹⁴ claiming that in Reid, Beattie, and Oswald: "The principles in debate are advanced as being peculiarly favourable to religion; and there are readers, I make no doubt who will be inclined to think they espy more calumny than verity in what our author has insinuated to the contrary."³⁹⁵ Cockin does not present evidence from the authors' works to support this claim, but relies upon the general acceptability of the assertion.

³⁸⁹ Cockin, 121.

³⁹⁰ Cockin, 121.

³⁹¹ "Their writings are intended to shew, that there are certain feelings, or instinctive suggestions of the mind, which in certain cases, under certain circumstances of operation, are as authoritative in themselves, and have always had as powerful an influence over human conduct, as the deductions of the strictest reasoning." Cockin, 121.

³⁹² Cockin 122.

³⁹³ Cockin, 126.

³⁹⁴ See pp. 139-40.

³⁹⁵ Cockin, 126-27.

His assessment of Priestley's arguments is made later in the postscript, in which he concedes that the Examination does expose some problematic areas in their arguments, but argues that this results from isolating sentences and taking arguments out of context. He explains that Priestley: "In his skirmishes with detached sentences, he may now and then gain a victory; and one or all of them may have extended their principles a little too far, and yet he be to blame, and they deserve well of the public."³⁹⁶ Again Cockin refers to no particular instances of such offences by Priestley nor does he quote any of the authors he defends to illustrate their worth; instead he argues that: "I have no doubt but the sensible Public will easily see, that this candid Examination was entered upon with intent to find fault; and that it is so conducted, that no one, unacquainted with the works he criticises, could gather from it the real principles and designs of their authors."³⁹⁷

Cockin finishes his investigation by acknowledging Priestley's good intentions while condemning the tone of his investigation:

I have no doubt of his sincerity, and believe him to be a zealous friend of religion. But since he has shewn, in the work before us, that these qualities deserve very little attention in a animated quest of truth, I hold it as unnecessary to apologize to him for a similar, though far inferior degree of warmth, as it must be unavailing to urge a sincerity and zeal, which has been so slender a protection to writers and metaphysicians who rank far above either Dr. Priestley, or the humble narrator of his ill-judged quarrel with Common Sense.³⁹⁸

Cockin's "Remarks" is a contemporary reaction to Priestley's Examination and illustrates the strong support for Beattie's common sense doctrines in the late eighteenth-century.

³⁹⁶ Cockin, 129.

³⁹⁷ Cockin, 129.

³⁹⁸ Cockin, 131.

The receptions of the Essay on Truth fall into two distinct categories: those who dismiss it as nothing more than a zealous criticism of the proper philosophical investigations of Hume, and those who praise it as a pious, well reasoned response to the dangerous consequences of modern philosophy. Priestley's Examination and Cockin's Fall of Scepticism represent the diverse reception of Beattie's work, and while they advance opposing ideas concerning Beattie's doctrines, they illustrate that there was significant engagement with the arguments of the Essay by contemporary thinkers. Beattie's partly drafted answer to Priestley's criticisms illustrates Beattie's desire to clarify the arguments of the Essay, and reinforces the high regard in which Beattie held Priestley as a clergyman and gentleman, despite their philosophical differences and the antagonism between them which was publicly displayed by Priestley in the Edinburgh Magazine and Review.

The Philosophical Satires

It is well known that Beattie composed The Minstrel as an intellectual break from the Essay on Truth, but the satires on sceptical thought he composed around this same time have received little critical attention. "The Castle of Scepticism" and "Letter: From a Regular Flow of Ideas and Impressions to the Idea of a Friend in the Country" (hereafter "Letter") were transcribed by the biographer of Hume, Ernest Campbell Mossner, in 1948 and 1951 respectively³⁹⁹ and have been included in Roger Robinson's recent collection of Beattie's works.⁴⁰⁰ The dating of "The Castle of Scepticism" manuscript is simple, since it bears a note written by Beattie, which reads: "This was written about six years ago, & before the Essay on

³⁹⁹ Ernest Campbell Mossner, "Beattie's 'The Castle of Scepticism': An Unpublished Allegory Against Hume, Voltaire, and Hobbes," Studies in English 27 (1948): 108-45, and Ernest Campbell Mossner, "Beattie on Voltaire: An Unpublished Parody," The Romanic Review 41 (1950): 26-32.

⁴⁰⁰ James Beattie, The Works of James Beattie, introduction Roger Robinson vol. 10 (London: Thoemmes-Routledge, 1996).

Truth was finished. It was never intended for publication”⁴⁰¹ and the end of the manuscript is dated April 1767. The dating of the “Letter” is more problematic, since it bears no date, but its subject matter suggests it was written around the same time as “The Castle of Scepticism.” However, it could also have been written when Beattie was preparing the second edition of the Essay, which includes a lengthy footnote dealing with the philosophy of Voltaire; but, given the similarities in the handwriting, it is more likely that it was composed around the same time as “The Castle of Scepticism.” The lack of a later note by Beattie supports the notion that Beattie considered it a purely private exercise.

These two unpublished satires represent another important literary condemnation of sceptical doctrines. The Minstrel attempts to address philosophical issues in poetic language, and ends with a sense of desperation and frustration with the genre as an inadequate vehicle for this kind of endeavour. “The Castle of Scepticism” and the “Letter” are two prose satires with the same goal, to expose the ridiculous nature of sceptical theories and the hypocritical nature of philosophers who articulate them, and to provide Beattie with an intellectual escape from the composition of the Essay on Truth. While there is no reference in Beattie’s letters to the “Letter,” he does hint at the possible publication of “The Castle of Scepticism,” but he subsequently abandoned the scheme.

The reasons for this suppression are speculated upon by Mossner in his introductions to the works, but his arguments are not wholly convincing. He argues that Beattie did not publish “The Castle of Scepticism” because the publication of such a satire “might conceivably lower his prestige among the serious-minded.”⁴⁰² Beattie himself explains the difficulties concerning the proper expression of sceptical doctrines in a letter to Thomas Blacklock, in which he responds to his friend’s suggestion that Beattie write a philosophical

⁴⁰¹ AUL MS 30/18.

⁴⁰² Mossner, “Castle of Scepticism,” 110.

romance on the subject, in which he articulates the obtuse nature of sceptical doctrines: “many of the capital doctrines of our Scepticks are so perfectly inconceivable and impracticable, that some of them could not be exemplified in Action at all, and others not without the grossest violation of probability.”⁴⁰³ Beattie reveals to Blacklock his concern over his ability adequately to express what he considered to be obtuse doctrines, as well as his recognition that if he were to try to do so, the narrative of the piece would probably need to be unrealistic.

The age’s “growing distaste for ridicule”⁴⁰⁴ no doubt contributed to Beattie’s anxiety concerning the publication of the satire. Mossner also suggest that he may have felt an illogical fear of possible retaliation from Hume and his numerous friends, explaining that such people were “already sufficiently outraged by the abuse heaped on him [Hume] in a supposedly philosophical essay without Beattie’s unnecessarily risking their reactions to a fictionalized satire.”⁴⁰⁵ Certainly, the reception of the Essay amongst Hume’s friends and supporters interested Beattie upon its original publication, but a letter on this topic does not reveal any illogical fear of their remarks.⁴⁰⁶ The first mention of “The Castle of Scepticism” is in a letter to Thomas Blacklock, in which Beattie relates the nature of the satire, and the fact that it was read as a graduation address by one of his students.⁴⁰⁷ A little more than a year later he writes to Blacklock in similar terms, but makes it clear that he does not hold the satire to be of much value: “I wrote two or three years ago the Castle of Scepticism, a Vision;

⁴⁰³ Beattie to Thomas Blacklock, 18 April 1769 (NLS Fettercairn Box 91) Beattie, Correspondence 2:85.

⁴⁰⁴ P.K. Elkin, The Augustan Defence of Satire (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973) 67.

⁴⁰⁵ Elkin, 67.

⁴⁰⁶ Beattie makes his opinions of Hume’s friends clear in a letter to James Williamson: “The illiberal and invidious tales which have been circulated by Mr Hume’s party, I thought it best to overlook, for I would have them to know that I despise them too much to be hurt by them.” Beattie to James Williamson, 13 April 1771. Beattie, Correspondence 2:135-38.

⁴⁰⁷ “Some years ago, I wrote a small Essay, about twice the length of a paper in the Spectator, called, The Castle of Scepticism, a vision. I gave it to a Student, an excellent Scholar and a favourite of mine, and caused him deliver it in public as his Graduation-speech; and it was much applauded.” Beattie to Thomas Blacklock 18 April 1769. Beattie, Correspondence 2:86.

which I wonder how I have never showed you. It is at the Trifler's service."⁴⁰⁸ Despite the implication that Beattie held the satire in such low esteem, his London diary of 1773 shows that he took the manuscript with him to that city, and circulated it among some ladies of his acquaintance.⁴⁰⁹ Beattie only mentions showing the satire to these ladies, and it is unclear why he did not share it with his other influential acquaintances, such as Joshua Reynolds and Samuel Johnson.

There is no evidence that the "Letter" was ever circulated, and Beattie makes no mention of its composition in his letters. Years after the composition of this satire, Beattie mentions Voltaire's reputation and position, in terms that explain his neglect of the "Letter" in his earlier correspondence, and his obvious desire to keep its existence private:

But while it continues to be the fashion, all over Europe, to read and admire Voltaire; and while some, even of the Clergy themselves, extol not only his wit, but his learning, and (what is more strange) his candour, it is to be feared, that the person who should write against him would not every where obtain a hearing.⁴¹⁰

This attitude concerning the works and reputation of Voltaire places the satire of the "Letter" within its proper context. The content of the "Letter" is not as developed as that of the other satire; it is a concise, and private, imaginative response to the popularity, and what Beattie considered the absurdity, of Voltaire's ideas.

⁴⁰⁸ Beattie to Thomas Blacklock 27 May 1770. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:106-9, also in W. Forbes, 1:170.

⁴⁰⁹ "I put in Mrs. Montagu's hands some scraps of prose Essays-...the castle of scepticism." And speaking of the Countess Cowper "she has now read some of my prose-essays as well as the Minstrel, and speaks in the highest terms of them all." Walker, *London Diary* 34, 79.

⁴¹⁰ Beattie to Lord Hailes, 22 November 1778. Beattie, *Correspondence* 3:85-87.

Its content is hinted at in a note written in a hand other than Beattie's, which survives, pasted to the top of the manuscript: "Proving after the Manner of Voltaire that Mathematics are false." This note was probably added by Beattie's nephew-in-law George Glennie, who inherited Beattie's numerous letters and papers, and sorted them so that the appropriate material could be available for Sir William Forbes, during his composition of Beattie's biography. The "Letter" is indeed predominately a satirical examination into the history of mathematics, which ends with the conclusion that mathematical systems are contrary to the very nature of true knowledge. These two satires represent an unexplored aspect of Beattie's literary works, and so an investigation into their content as well as the literary works to which they are indebted is essential to a full understanding of Beattie's literary career.

It is probable that Beattie took the hint for his title "The Castle of Scepticism" from Thomson's satirical poem, The Castle of Indolence, which he echoes in some of the satirical lines of The Minstrel. Beattie follows Thomson's model for his pilgrimage through the castle and the allegorical figures he meets, and his text relates to the second canto of The Castle of Indolence in which the speaker "aspires to be a moralist, not a self-indulgent self-absorbed dreamer."⁴¹¹ Nowhere does Beattie suffer from indolence regarding the necessity of confuting sceptical doctrines, and his zealous treatment of the subject has brought modern criticism as it brought contemporary fame. The various influences that are evident throughout the work suggest that Beattie values satire as a vehicle for the vindication of religion and the ridicule of sceptical philosophers; but his insecurities concerning his own satirical abilities are illustrated by his reluctance to make the satires public. The structure of "The Castle of Scepticism" is similar to that of Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress, as Robinson and King have noted, but the similarities go no further.

⁴¹¹ Thomson, 172.

There are many literary borrowings in the satire, and Beattie's invocation of many notable satirists and other authors (such as Milton, Shakespeare, Swift, and Pope) in the text itself reinforce his intention to situate the work within the English satirical tradition. While these literary echoes are important, "The Castle of Scepticism" should be investigated within the context of the composition of its contemporary works, the Essay on Truth and The Minstrel. This satire is another vehicle Beattie sought to use as a refutation of Scepticism, and an imaginative refuge from his rigorous philosophical inquiry. "The Castle of Scepticism" also represents a unique satirical depiction of scepticism and its consequences, as perceived by a member of the religious establishment.

Beattie's satire opens in a similar way to Bunyan's work, with the speaker dreaming the narrative. Beattie's dream begins after falling asleep while reading a volume of Hume's works in a garden. The recounting of the vision begins with an interesting allusion to the descent of Aeneas into the underworld in the Sixth Book of The Aeneid, which has led Everard King to make a case for the considerable literary debt of the "Castle of Scepticism" to Virgil's epic. Beattie's "Remarks" on this book of The Aeneid outlines its theology and narrative structure, aspects of Virgil's work which do not appear in the "The Castle of Scepticism."

The speaker begins by relinquishing any pretensions to Second Sight (a Scottish belief), and assures the reader of his objective intentions: "but of which I do not pretend to conjecture whether it [the vision] issued through the gate of ivory, or through that of horn" (115). The contemporary debate concerning Virgil's intention for two gates at the end of Book VI provides an interesting context for this opening. Virgil places Aeneas and the sybil at the two gates which lead from the underworld: "There are twin Gates of Sleep, of which one is said to be of horn, allowing an easy exit for shadows which are true.

The other is all of shining white ivory, perfectly made; but the Spirits send visions which are false in the light of day.”⁴¹² Why Virgil chose to send his hero through the ivory gate generated much conjecture from Beattie’s contemporaries, and he himself addressed his question years later in “Remarks on Some Passages in the Sixth Book of the Eneid.”⁴¹³ Beattie argues that the common argument is not wholly sound: “What can this imply, but that the poet meant to insinuate, that every thing he had said concerning a state of future retribution, was nothing more than a fallacious dream?”⁴¹⁴ He answers this argument by proposing that Virgil intended the character of his poet to be separate from himself, and “By making the poet his own interpreter, and not seeking to find things in his book which we have no good reason to think were ever in his head”⁴¹⁵ there is no evidence to suggest a deeper meaning in the choice of gate.

Clearly the opening of “The Castle of Scepticism” harkens back to this Virgilian image, consciously setting up the speaker as an objective storyteller, and also seeming to encourage the reader to take the work at face value. King makes a great deal of Beattie’s literary debt to The Aeneid for his fable, but relies solely upon the initial allusion to support this relationship. He argues: “the satire is a direct adaptation of the descent of Aeneas into the underworld.”⁴¹⁶ This overlooks the allegorical nature of Beattie’s work, which illustrates the characters of various sceptical philosophers, and Virgil’s intention to honour the ancestors of Augustus through the recitation of great Romans and their fate in the afterlife.

⁴¹² Virgil, The Aeneid, trans. W. F. Jackson Knight (London: Penguin, 1958) 174.

⁴¹³ This was the subject of a discourse to the Royal Society of Edinburgh, into which Beattie was admitted as a member of the literary class in 1783. His essay was published in the Society’s proceedings of 1790.

⁴¹⁴ James Beattie, “Remarks on Some Passages in the Sixth Book of the Eneid,” Miscellaneous Items (London: Thoemmes-Routledge, 1996) 50.

⁴¹⁵ Beattie, “Remarks,” 52.

⁴¹⁶ Everard King, “James Beattie’s ‘The Castle of Scepticism’ (1767): A Suppressed Satire on Eighteenth-Century Sceptical Philosophy,” Scottish Literary Journal 2 (1975): 28.

The dream journey begins with the speaker thinking the journey will end “at some Auditory erelong, and hear a dissertation on the nature of things” (116). Instead, the speaker is told that the purpose of their pilgrimage is “to learn wisdom from this Great Oracle of modern times; who is acknowledged by all the world to be the deepest genius and wisest philosopher ever known” (118). To reach this pinnacle the group wanders on, and some of the speaker’s companions expound sceptical theories: “My friend has proved, that there is no human mind [and that] man has no more soul than an oyster-shell” (119). This strikes at La Mettrie’s L’ Homme Machine, which denies the existence of a soul and illustrates the mechanistic nature of the body. Beattie’s characters then illustrate the paradoxical nature of sceptical philosophy, while repeating some of the accusations made against Hume in the Essay on Truth: “His [Hume’s] tenets obviously lead to the utter subversion of all truth, learning, and virtue; but he has always employed his greatest talents in promoting the cause of truth and the interests of mankind” (121).

The travellers reach the castle, and to be admitted the group disperses to sacrifice their common sense to their gods, at temples dedicated: “To Affectation, another To Ignorance, a third To self-Conceit” (123). To this scene of sacrifice King attributes great importance, but misapprehends the text by arguing that Beattie is admitted without making a sacrifice “in the hope of his later conversion.”⁴¹⁷ But there is no evidence in the text to support the idea that the sceptics felt confident that Beattie would be converted. Upon reaching the gate Beattie has a conversation with a guard which explains his position, but makes no reference to any desire to “convert” him.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁷ King, “Castle” 22.

⁴¹⁸ “the sacrifice of Common Sense to the Divinities we worship is a kind of test by which we distinguish a friend from a stranger; if you choose to appear among us in the latter character, you need not expect many extraordinary civilities, but you may depend on meeting with no bad treatment” (124).

The speaker asks whether a person must make this sacrifice to enter the castle, and a nearby guard explains the ritual:

‘We do not object’ continued he, ‘to the principles of any man: the sacrifice of Common Sense to the Divinities we worship is a kind of test by which we distinguish a friend from a stranger; if you choose to appear among us in the latter character, you need not expect many extraordinary civilities, but you may depend on meeting with no bad treatment (124).

This toleration springs from the idea that varying philosophical systems are important to the development of the discipline and contribute to overall knowledge. This initially introduces sceptical philosophers as open minded, but their later condemnation of Beattie’s arguments, which he articulates using his common sense, illustrate the actual paradoxical nature of sceptical doctrines. Beattie is admitted as a stranger with his common sense intact, and proceeds into the castle, where he will engage with a series of philosophers, before his climactic exchange with Hume.

Beattie then comes upon the caricature of Descartes, and delves into his theories with much interest. Descartes is not named, but his identity becomes clear through the description of his character. This philosopher: “denied, and hoped in a short time to bring himself to doubt, his own existence. He had tied up a bandage over his eyes, and stopt his ears, which however could not entirely prevent his hearing; his nostrils also were stuffed; and his tongue and palate, and the points of his fingers were seared with a hot iron” (127). Descartes then relates to Beattie that denial of this kind, and indeed of what every rational person will accept, is a cornerstone in the development of sceptical theory: “By falling in with their notions we shall never be able to raise ourselves into notice: we must therefore pursue the different and opposite method of denying whatever they affirm, and doubting whatever they

hold for certain” (127). Beattie answers this assertion with a rehearsal of famous men whose works did not overturn nature: Bacon, Newton, Archimedes, Homer, Virgil, etc (127). This roll-call sparks a debate between Beattie and Descartes over the nature of genius and the value of explaining the mysteries of nature. This scene relates to the debate on genius and originality in The Minstrel and further reinforces the opposing views of scepticism and common sense. The debate ends when a fight breaks out between two other pilgrims nearby, and so there is no certain resolution between the factions.

Before Beattie arrives at the next prominent philosopher, he meets two strangers expounding the philosophies of Hume the Governor. The first explains Hume’s system of argument with an absurd illustration of reasoning as used by sceptics: “[to] prove by argument that by argument nothing can be proved, he has contrived a puppet of mushrooms, cork, cobwebs, gossamer, and other fungous and flimsy materials, to which he gives the name of Reason” (132). This is perhaps an attack upon La Mettrie’s argument against the existence of the soul through reasoning. The next stranger explains the tendency of sceptics to disbelieve the senses, yet rely upon each others’ theories with confidence: “we admit none of those tenets in which all the rest of mankind are agreed, yet believe in one another with the most implicit and most obstinate assurance, especially when our belief is required to something inconceivable” (132-33). This sceptical devotee illustrates the paradoxical interaction between sceptical theorists. Beattie illustrates here that they determine to disbelieve the evidence of the senses, despite its being-from Beattie’s standpoint-self-evident, but will acquiesce in their colleagues’ theories, which are based upon ambiguous argument. He further witnesses many other curious sceptics before arriving at the caricature of Voltaire. These spectacles include a man who “was continually busied in turning a large engine, like that described in Gulliver’s travels, which threw up an endless variety of

combinations of words and letters, out of which were framed sentences and paragraphs, sections, chapters, and treatises" (134). This comment on the rhetorical care and attention paid by sceptical writers to their works is supplanted by two scenes of cruelty to two young children, which illustrates the absurdity of two physiological theories.⁴¹⁹

This is followed by a gruesome depiction of Mandeville's paradox, in which a hangman explains the use of human parts in manure, thus showing "that private vices are really publick benefits" (137-38). From this disturbing sight Beattie turns and is soon met by Voltaire, whose depiction is in keeping with his predecessors. The exchange between the two begins with Voltaire sneering at Providence, and the promised eternal afterlife of Christianity which Beattie will refute:

Those cruel and hypocritical blockheads the parsons, and some philosophic pedants too, have taken for granted, that all the events of life are directed by what they call Providence, that in a future and better state of existence every thing will appear to have been ordered for the best. This you know, Gentleman, is the same thing with saying, that the present is the best of all possible worlds (138).

To this Beattie makes a simple and logical answer: "it is a very different thing. If we believe in a future world that shall be better than the present, we cannot surely believe the present to be the best world possible" (139). Voltaire replies with "his eye glistening with inexpressible rage and disdain" (139). This outrage will be mirrored in Beattie's encounter with Thomas Hobbes, whose character and philosophy are more developed. Hobbes "was armed cap-a-pie in the Gothick fashion, and held in each hand a cocked blunderbuss" (140) and begins by

⁴¹⁹The first is a lampoon of Shaftesbury, and depicts a boy with a cat's tail stuck to his rump, proving that "man was originally a beast, and would never live agreeable to nature, till he had again relapsed to that state." (34) The second is of Monboddo, which deals with a philosopher attempting to affix two human thumbs cut from a boy onto the paws of a monkey. To prove that "it is from his Thumb alone, that man derives his superiority; and therefore Logicians ought to have distinguished him by this organ" (135-36).

explaining the basic elements of his own moral system: "Man's natural state is a state of war. All men have originally an equal right to all things, and an equal desire of power and superiority" (141). This right, Hobbes would argue, logically leads Beattie to a desire for all that another possesses: "nothing hinders you [Beattie] from attempting to divest me of these; but either the impossibility of success or the fear of punishment" (141). To this assertion Beattie proposes the idea of the conscience: "I assure I would not do you any harm, or divest you of any one of them even though it were in my power. My conscience, Sir, would not allow me" (141). Hobbes retaliates by explaining his opposing definition of that faculty: "what is Conscience? Nothing but the fear of inconvenience or punishment" (142).

Hobbes further argues that there is no inherent distinction between vice and virtue, because they are within the sphere of conscience, and so are subjective and individual. Hobbes then explains the social contract as one "by which they bind themselves, every man for himself, that he will obey and support the sovereign to the utmost of his power, on condition that the rest of his fellow-subjects do the same" (143). Beattie illustrates the paradoxical nature of this definition, because it hinges upon a distinction between vice and virtue, but Hobbes has argued that there is no difference between them: "could men enter into a contract or promise, who had no notion of the unlawfulness of falsehood or treachery, but imagined that all sorts of human conduct were equally lawful?" (144).

Hobbes makes no answer to this question, but wears "a most furious look" (144) and Beattie leaves the scene in fear for his life. This departure, King argues, is evidence that "Having defeated Hobbes in argument, Beattie sees no point in battling with him physically."⁴²⁰ However, this interpretation is not supported by the text, rather, the speaker has reason to fear for his safety: "[I] accordingly took to my heels, and ran a full quarter of a

⁴²⁰ King, "Castle" 26.

mile before I ventured to take breath" (144). This heated scene is followed by the climax of the satire, the introduction of David Hume, the Governor of the Castle.

Hume is attended by priests, lawyers, and venerable gentlemen, "and with a show of extreme politeness, yet methought very officiously, invited travellers to the threshold, and then pushed them out headlong; smiling at the same time with a mixture of contempt and self-complacency" (144). It is not Hume's actions, but his words, which shock Beattie's sensibilities, but he does not put words into Hume's mouth directly. Instead the reader is privy to Beattie's interpretation of them: "[Hume] concluded a long harangue with a few corollaries, plausible indeed and well-disguised, but of such blasphemous import that my hair stood on end with horror" (145). This oration is suddenly halted by the crash of a thunderbolt, which seems to bring Hume to some religious repentance: "The orator fell on his knees, and began to repeat the Apostles creed with the utmost vehemence of voice and gesture" (145). Mossner argues this particular passage refers to a well known anecdote of Hume's doing this in order to be assisted in freeing himself from a bog. According to the anecdote, a passing woman offered to help Hume if he first recited the Apostles' creed.

He turns his attention to a voice which says: "Turn ye mortals, from the path of the destroyer, and now listen to the words of Truth" (145). This Deus-ex-machina is the first religious intervention, and as these words slowly die away, a physical incarnation of religion is invoked to restore the speaker. He is brought back from his dream into the physical world by "the bell of the parish-church that now summoned [him] to prayers" (145). The church bells symbolise the faith that has enabled the speaker to negotiate his way through the castle, encountering sceptical doctrines and withstanding arguments through the use of the philosophers' common sense. The end of the satire brings the pilgrim back to his present circumstances with a particular reference to his own piety, personifying the inherent value of

religion as an antidote to sceptical philosophy. It is a fully developed satirical response to the philosophy which Beattie combated in the Essay on Truth. The other satire in the manuscript collection presents a shorter satirical response to Voltaire, whose great reputation and impious doctrines Beattie found dangerous to society.

It is another example of Beattie's desire to refute scepticism even in his leisure compositions. "Letter From a Regular Flow of Ideas and Impressions to the Idea of a Friend in the Country," adopts a different persona and tone. Ernest Campbell Mossner titled his article "Beattie on Voltaire: An Unpublished Parody,"⁴²¹ which gives a clue to its subject. The work of Voltaire's mentioned by name in the "Letter" is the Dictionnaire Philosophique (1764); the speaker praises the style of the collection of topical essays as well as the style of the author himself. Its length (under two thousand words) and subject matter (the history of mathematics) support the claim which Mossner's title makes for the work.

The Dictionnaire Philosophique was infamous in Voltaire's lifetime: "it was condemned by all the establishments, religious and governmental, drawing from Voltaire the usual flood of protestations and disavowals."⁴²² Voltaire's lack of conviction in this work presented Beattie with what he took to be another example of sceptical hypocrisy, as well as a dangerous philosophical system that was widely read and discussed throughout Europe. Besterman argues: "Voltaire deliberately planned the Dictionnaire as a 'revolutionary' book, in which the most 'liberal' ideas were to be expressed openly and lucidly, and made available to all who could read."⁴²³ To accomplish this aim he "tried to ascertain the facts, then drew ethical conclusions from them, and finally presented these conclusions with the lucidity and

⁴²¹ The title of the satire implies that it is intended to mock the style of Voltaire's entries in the Philosophical Dictionary.

⁴²² Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary trans. Theodore Besterman (London: Penguin, 1971) 5.

⁴²³ Theodore Besterman, Voltaire (London: Longman, 1969) 435.

elegant irony which were the secrets of his unique style.”⁴²⁴ It is this style, and the philosophical conclusions it is used to convey, which Beattie found dangerous, and he attempts to discredit Voltaire’s impious assertions by illustrating their absurd nature through satire.

The length of the satire also suggests that Beattie intended to emulate an entry in Voltaire’s work, which explains the seemingly less developed argument in this satire when compared to the “Castle of Scepticism.” The “Letter” begins by establishing the speaker as a confirmed sceptic; he presents many elements of sceptical arguments and acknowledges their merit, and faults Voltaire with limiting his investigations to the confutation of religion alone. To rectify this, the speaker, writing in the style of Voltaire, inserts a portion of a forthcoming chapter of a treatise, entitled “Historical Remarks on Mathematicks.” This is the particular argument of the letter, and it is a satirical response to Voltaire’s rebuttal of Maupertuis’ mathematical formula ($m \cdot AR + n \cdot RB$) to prove the existence of God.

In the Dictionnaire Philosophique Voltaire alludes to Maupertuis in his section on religion: “One need only give one’s soul a certain degree of exaltation, as has been admirably conceived by the honest philosopher⁴²⁵ or fool in our days who wanted to pierce a hole to the antipodes, and wanted to smear the sick with resin.”⁴²⁶ It is likely that Voltaire’s attack upon this philosopher/scientist sparked Beattie’s imagination on this particular topic, and the subject matter of the bulk of the satire supports this proposition. The speaker begins by praising his supposed reader for his advancements in sceptical thinking, such as the non-existence of God, of the self, of right and wrong, and the impossibility of belief.⁴²⁷ He then turns to the Dictionnaire Philosophique, which prompts sincere reverence: “and [I] am

⁴²⁴ Besterman, Voltaire 438-9.

⁴²⁵ Besterman’s note to the passage: “Maupertuis, who, if he was not so great a philosopher as he thought himself, was by no means so great a fool as Voltaire thought him.” Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary 349.

⁴²⁶ Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary 349.

⁴²⁷ Mossner, “Beattie on Voltaire, 28-30.

delighted to find so much wit and genius so well directed in supporting the common cause of infidelity & virtue" (29). To introduce the argument concerning mathematics the speaker relates it to the evidence used by Voltaire to refute Christianity: "you may perhaps find objections as convincing, brought against Geometry and Algebra, as any with which our pious philosopher has been able to perplex the hopes and enjoyments of the Christian" (30). The chapter attempts to refute the notion of mathematical truth, which is "founded upon a knowledge of the existence and original properties of points and lines"⁴²⁸ (30). This law of mathematics allows for infinite points along any given line, "And surely such points cannot be material, since every material substance must have all the properties of which they are destitute" (30) such as length and breadth. This argument illustrates the fact that common sense and mathematical precepts are not easily reconciled, and it will be further exemplified in the discussion of the asymptote.

The satirical climax of the "Letter" comes in the next paragraph, when the speaker turns to the definition and function of the asymptote. This is a line in a hyperbola which approaches the other line but never meets it, and so the speaker concludes they must run parallel, but "Common Sense, whose knowledge a definition improves, answers No" (12). This contradiction is explained by the particular language used to illustrate this proof. The speaker explains: "For Common Sense by your saying they approach understands nothing but this, that to some common point both are bending, and therefore to some common point both must arrive" (31). Here the speaker illustrates the ambiguities in language which can be problematic in philosophical or mathematical systems, but turns a satirical bend and comments that there can be "no mystery so mysterious, as the mystery of the Asymptote" (31). The following passage illustrates what the speaker believes to be errors in the

⁴²⁸ Mossner argues this passage refers to Hume's argument against the infinite divisibility of space in the Treatise. Mossner, "Beattie on Voltaire" 30.

presentation of Euclid, and mathematicians who followed him. This passage contains the second reference to Voltaire's Dictionnaire Philosophique, but it differs from the former greatly, because it presents a particular argument of that philosopher against Christianity.

The speaker first outlines his objection to Euclid and his followers: "Pure and abstract truth can surely acknowledge no appeal to scrawls and hieroglyphicks; especially scrawls which are shaped in a manner repugnant to decorum" (31). For verification of this scheme the speaker turns to Voltaire, "whose favourite arguments in confutation of Christianity is founded upon the indelicacy of a passage in Ezekiel" (31). This reference to Voltaire's section on the book of Ezekiel in the Dictionnaire Philosophique presents an interesting context for Beattie's use of Voltaire's style of argument in the satire. Voltaire argues that this book of the Bible illustrates the evils of Jerusalem, and cannot be compared by modern critics with contemporary morality.

He then articulates a passage from Ezekiel, chapter xv, which presents the crimes Jerusalem has committed against God through the metaphor of God the father, and Jerusalem the daughter. Beattie then praises Voltaire's manipulation of the biblical text to suit his own needs, which Mossner argues is not supported by Voltaire's actual text.⁴²⁹ Besterman makes a similar note to this passage concerning Ezekiel,⁴³⁰ illustrating that Beattie's assumptions concerning Voltaire's meaning have not survived amongst modern scholars.

The manipulation of scripture is "to signify, that those declarations, which Israel preserved as the words of Omniscient Purity, were too indelicate for the chaste ears of the French philosopher" (12). Voltaire's text omits certain words because of their indelicate associations, and explains that "The expressions that to us appear broad were not then so

⁴²⁹ Mossner's note to this passage: "Beattie's comment is curious because Voltaire has merely followed the Biblical text in referring to Jerusalem as a girl who became a harlot; and his astericks merely indicate the omission of passages." Mossner, "Beattie on Voltaire" 31-32.

⁴³⁰ Besterman comments: "Rather than a direct quotation this is a selective abstract, but perfectly accurate, of *Ezekiel* xvi.4-34, 44. Voltaire, 198.

regarded.”⁴³¹ Beattie’s displeasure no doubt came from his own attitudes towards scripture as the word of God, which should not be condensed to suit a modern author’s purpose. Nowhere in the satire does Beattie make this overtly clear, but his mockery of Voltaire’s supposed reserve in his use of the Bible in the Dictionnaire Philosophique supports this proposition.⁴³²

The final paragraph of the satire draws a parallel between the outlandish arguments made for the illogical nature of mathematics and Voltaire’s investigations of Christianity. The speaker champions his arguments as valid “since arguments similar in kind, and of evidence perhaps inferiour, have been deemed by our great master Voltaire, and his numerous adherents, sufficient for the confutation of Christianity” (32). Voltaire’s section on Christianity focuses upon the history of the religion, and its tone is biting in a number of instances. Voltaire ironically comments that the life, ministry and death of Jesus are not recorded by Greek or Roman historians, because “God did not want all these divine things to be written down by profane hands.”⁴³³ He then turns to the conflicting modern genealogies of Jesus, illustrating the conundrum. From this controversy he rehearses the history of Christianity as an organised religion, and is confident that “So many lies fabricated by badly informed and falsely zealous Christians did not injure the truth of Christianity; they did not hinder its establishment.”⁴³⁴ Voltaire’s comments in this section do not refute Christianity, but trace the history of Jesus and the development of the organised religion based upon his life and ministry. Despite Voltaire’s seeming detachment toward his subject the ironic tone of this section undoubtedly upset Beattie and his parody is an attempt to highlight the impious nature of his writings, and to illustrate the implications of the popularity of these arguments.

⁴³¹ Voltaire, 199.

⁴³² Beattie asserts that Voltaire changes the biblical passage “to signify, that those declarations, which Israel preserved as the words of Omniscient Purity, were to indelicate for the chaste ears of the French Philosopher.” Mossner, “Beattie on Voltaire” 31.

⁴³³ Voltaire, 117.

⁴³⁴ Voltaire, 129.

The “Castle of Scepticism” and the “Letter” represent an important satirical defence of religion by Beattie, and were written during the most productive period of his career. Together they represent a little explored response to sceptical theories and the consequences of their popularity. Beattie’s repression of these satires during his lifetime suggests that his insecurities concerning his poetry extended to these prose satires, in which he vented some of his frustrations concerning scepticism and its contemporary popularity in a less formal setting than in that of the Essay on Truth. They show that Beattie’s response to sceptical doctrines was not limited by genre. The fact that he chose to suppress the prose satire and allowed his philosophical treatise and The Minstrel to see the light of day highlights his conscious desire to protect his reputation as a serious philosopher and poet.

Chapter 5: The Making of a Legacy, Beattie's Final Poetry

These three editions represent the final stages of James Beattie's poetical career, and demonstrate his desire to protect his poetic reputation as he turned his attention to essays, criticism, and theological issues. The success of The Minstrel solidified his reputation as a poet, but the Essay on Truth made a name for him as a serious philosopher, and Beattie knew that he could not easily reconcile this way of thinking with his poetic inclinations. Beattie's final volumes of poetry represents his attempt "to appeal equally to an immediate audience, to posterity, and to the Christian afterlife [so] that some residue of the self, whether as name or Soul, would last beyond death."⁴³⁵ He had composed no new poetry since the completion of The Minstrel, and the death of Dr. Gregory, but there remained several unpublished poems from his most productive poetic years, which he published in the first of his later volumes. Beattie's career at this time exemplifies the conflict between the poetic and philosophical genius he articulated to Charles Boyd in 1766: "The incompatibility of philosophical and poetic genius is, I think, no unaccountable thing. Poetry exhibits the general qualities of a species; philosophy the particular qualities of individuals."⁴³⁶

Throughout Beattie's career his poems had hinted at this conflict between imagination and reason, which climaxes in the frustration and sorrow that ends The Minstrel. The crisis of the poetic imagination articulated in The Minstrel arose in Beattie's own career because of his intense philosophical pursuits, and so he reinvents his creative inclinations as a critic and essayist. Later this letter foreshadows the conflict between the creative imagination and philosophical investigation that led to his desire to protect his already made reputation, while preparing the critical essays which he felt would do far greater service to society.

⁴³⁵ Leo Braudy, The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986) 387.

⁴³⁶ Beattie to Charles Boyd 16 November 1766. Beattie, Correspondence 1:22. Also found in W. Forbes, 1:94-95 and M. Forbes, 32.

Beattie begins by recognising the importance of what he calls a “superficial” knowledge of philosophy for the poetic imagination, but reasons that philosophical knowledge:

if it is any thing more than superficial, will do a poet rather harm than good; and will give his mind that turn for minute observation, which enfeebles fancy by restraining it, and counteracts the native energy of judgement by rendering it fearful and suspicious.⁴³⁷

The philosophical study required for the composition of the Essay on Truth stifled Beattie’s poetic powers, and he makes a conscious decision to shift his focus from poetry to criticism. His life experiences in the years following his days as a schoolmaster in the hills of Fordoun have altered his perceptions of poetry and solitude. In 1778 his second son, Montagu, was born, and the birth signalled the collapse of his wife’s mental health. Two years later Beattie admits to close friends that his wife is insane, and two years after that it became necessary to remove her from the household permanently.

Throughout this time, “Beattie often wrote in such anguish and perplexity about [her illness that], he would often give a great deal of detail,”⁴³⁸ but her actual illness is unclear. In June of 1784 Mary Beattie was taken into a private house in Musselburgh, and it is unlikely that she ever saw her husband again.⁴³⁹ The drastic change in Beattie’s household at this time presents an important context for his determination to give up poetry; he faced the daunting task of raising his sons alone and suffered the grief of his wife’s estrangement, as well as his own precarious health. This domestic tragedy arguably completed the quenching of his poetic imagination begun by his philosophical pursuits.

⁴³⁷ Beattie to Charles Boyd 16 November 1766. Beattie, Correspondence 1:22. Also found in W. Forbes, 1:94-95 and M. Forbes, 32.

⁴³⁸ Roger Robinson, “Madness” 191.

⁴³⁹ Paraphrased from Robinson, “Madness” 192.

Beattie begins the process of protecting his poetic career in Poems on Several Occasions (1776), which was requested by William Creech for inclusion in his British Poets series. Only a handful of Beattie's early poems are revised for this edition, and it also contains four poems hitherto unpublished, at least one of which Beattie included to disprove his reputation as a sombre philosopher.⁴⁴⁰ While these poems were newly printed, they had been composed before the publication of The Minstrel in 1771.⁴⁴¹ Three of the new poems featured in this edition were composed for a particular purpose, such as honouring an occasion or praising an acquaintance, while another is closely linked to The Minstrel.

The "Epistle to the Honourable C.B." was composed as a response to a verse epistle introduction written by Charles Boyd to Beattie: "Epitaph: Being part of an inscription for a monument, to be erected by a gentleman to the memory of his lady" was written at the behest of John Gregory in honour of his late wife, and the "Ode on Lord Hay's birth-day" was composed to celebrate the birth of James Hay's son and heir. "The Hermit" is the final new poem in the collection, and is unique amongst them because of its connection to The Minstrel in both its subject and themes.

It is likely that the new poems were chosen because they reflected his particular desire to honour his friends, and those whose influence and acquaintance enriched his life, both privately and professionally. They are poems of occasion and purpose, composed during Beattie's most productive poetic period. Beattie makes only slight revisions to these poems between the editions of '76 and the final '84 edition,⁴⁴² while the revised poems included in this edition are altered from the previous text.

⁴⁴⁰ "The Epistle to C.B. is inserted merely to show, that I am not quite so sour a metaphysician as some people imagine." Beattie to Cosmo Gordon, 22 May 1777. Beattie, Correspondence 3:56.

⁴⁴¹ Beattie shared these poems in letters: Beattie to Charles Boyd, 1 August 1766. Beattie, Correspondence 2:49-50; Beattie to John Gregory, 20 December 1770. Beattie, Correspondence 2:131-33. Beattie to William Forbes, 22 October 1768. Beattie, Correspondence 2:63-68. Additionally, Thomas Gray writes to Beattie in praise of the "Ode" 24 December 1767 (AUL MS 30 B24/6/4).

⁴⁴² The changes made are replacing full names with * (ie. Hay becomes H**) and other revisions to punctuation.

Beattie condemns to ignominy the bulk of his early poetry, and he speaks of those poems which he does revise for the edition with derision, aroused by his now negative opinion of solitude and the imagination. He revises five poems for this new edition, and thinks them of “very little merit; but the Author deserves praise for submitting to the task of correcting those incorrigible performances, which the more he reads the more he dislikes.”⁴⁴³ These five poems represent all that Beattie would perpetuate from his early works, and he renounces his others in strong terms: “As to all my other Poems, the Ode to Peace, Judgement of Paris, etc. I would not rescue them one instant from oblivion, even if a wish could do it.”⁴⁴⁴ This negative view of his early poetry culminates in the final two editions of poetry which he edits, “The Minstrel,” in Two Books: With Some Other Poems (1779 and 1784), in which Beattie includes less than a third of the poems in his two early volumes. He intended the 1779 edition of his poems as an answer to the unauthorised editions of The Minstrel and of his early poems. While preparing this edition for the press he gave the property of his poems to his publishers Creech and Dilly,⁴⁴⁵ who were responsible for the subsequent editions of the 1790s. In the advertisement (dated 1777)⁴⁴⁶ Beattie makes it clear that these poems are the only ones he would reprint, or indeed acknowledge, in the future. For this edition, Beattie eliminated the “Epistle to the Honourable C.B.,” and made minor changes to poems previously published. Five years later Beattie would see a final edition of his poems through the press, keeping the title and order of the 1779 edition. While the order and content do not change between 1779 and 1784, substantive changes were made to The Minstrel.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴³ Beattie to William Creech, 4 November 1776. Beattie, Correspondence 3:28-29.

⁴⁴⁴ Beattie to William Forbes, 16 November 1776. Beattie, Correspondence 3:30-33.

⁴⁴⁵ “I am likewise about publishing the Minstrel with a few other poems, which I have given the property of the Messrs Dilly and Creech, in return for some favours I have received from them.” Beattie to Sir William Forbes 10 March 1778. Beattie, Correspondence 3:57-59.

⁴⁴⁶ Beattie drafted a version of this advertisement in his day-book, dated February 1778: See Appendix, p. 327.

⁴⁴⁷ These are outlined in Appendix, 315-17 and discussed in chapter 3, see pp. 108-9.

Beattie writes to Elizabeth Montagu shortly before the publication of this final edition, in which he states his weariness with the exercise in poetic terms:

When this affair is settled, and the volume revised once more, I bid adieu to poetry forever—I wish I could say of my voice, what Milton said of his; that it is—
unchanged To Hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days, On evil days though
fallen—But alas, I am in the condition of Virgil’s forlorn shepherd, to whom indeed it
becomes me to compare myself. *Omnia fert ætas, animum quoque.*⁴⁴⁸

This is the first reference Beattie makes to the diminishing nature of his poetic powers, and it supports the idea that his career as a philosopher has stifled his poetic creativity. He also reprinted the advertisement dated 1777 in this edition, which reinforces his desire to renounce his earlier works in favour of those in this volume. The edition of 1784 was intended to protect his reputation as a serious poet, and to publish for the final time those of his early poems he would acknowledge. Three other editions were published by Creech and Dilly during Beattie’s lifetime, though Beattie did not sanction two of these, and this irresponsible behaviour of his publishers brought him great anxiety. The first of these editions appeared 1796 and was published without his knowledge or involvement, and bears the title of the 1776 edition, which did not contain Beattie’s final editorial changes. It is clear from his letters that he did not intend to revise his poems after the 1784 edition, and so the inaccuracies of this edition vexed him. He vents his frustrations in a letter to Sir William Forbes in December of that year, in which he believes “with most unaccountable inattention, they [the editions of 1797 and 1799] follow, not the last and best edition corrected by myself, and printed by Dilly

⁴⁴⁸ Beattie to Elizabeth Montagu, 2 February 1784. Beattie, *Correspondence* 3:198-200. Beattie’s translation of these lines from Virgil’s Eclogue IX from *OPT* is of interest here: “The rest I have forgot, for length of years / Deadens the sense, and memory impairs. / All things in time submit to sad decay; / Oft have we sung whole summer suns away. / These vanish’d joys must MOERIS now deplore, / His voice delights, his numbers charm no more” (92-7).

in 1784, but an imperfect edition of a prior date"⁴⁴⁹ which omits the names of John Gregory and Elizabeth Montagu, as well as the stanza added to Book II of The Minstrel for the 1784 edition. The subsequent editions of 1797 and 1799⁴⁵⁰ reprint the text of the 1784 edition. Beattie did not edit these last two editions, and relied upon his publishers to follow the revisions of 1784. Taken as one entity, these later volumes represent a shift in Beattie's poetic tastes and his desire to renounce many of his early poems, which were inspired by the solitude and the natural surroundings of his young adulthood. Beattie omits two of his early poems, "Ode to Peace" and "The Triumph of Melancholy." The former is politically charged, while the latter is representative of his youthful attachment to the natural sublime, and the effects of solitude upon the poetic imagination.

He explains his current view of his early poetry in a letter to Elizabeth Montagu, which he wrote upon learning she had lately read his 1766 volume: "The glare of images, the tawdry style, the overcharged harmony, to say nothing of its other faults, are to me the objects of very great disgust; and it covers me with shame and with sorrow to think, that you should have had the misfortune to peruse it."⁴⁵¹ This passage highlights Beattie's determination to banish from all memory the early poems he does not deem worthy of inclusion in the later editions. His attitude toward his early poetry is indeed severe, and an investigation into the early poems he chooses to revise, and the revisions made for his later editions, present an interesting context for his altered criteria for poetic excellence.

⁴⁴⁹ Beattie to Sir William Forbes, 3 December 1796. Beattie, Correspondence 4:223-24.

⁴⁵⁰ This edition also contained a volume of James Hay Beattie's poetry and an account of the author written by Beattie.

⁴⁵¹ Beattie to Elizabeth Montagu, 20 April 1778. Beattie, Correspondence 3:60-63. Also found in M. Forbes, 143.

Revised Poems

The revisions made to the early poems revised for POSO consist generally in clarifying the diction and the flow of the verse. An investigation of the poems Beattie chooses to revise for these final volumes can provide some insight into the poetic legacy he is attempting to build, and his abandonment of his early poetry illustrates his altered poetical outlook. Two of the four early Pindaric odes are revised, “Retirement,” and “Ode to Hope,” but as already noted, he eliminates the “Ode to Peace” and “The Triumph of Melancholy”⁴⁵² from all of his later volumes. Beattie’s reason for excluding the “Ode to Peace” was probably the poem’s politically charged subject, its comments upon the Seven Years’ War, as well as the obsession with luxury and wealth of the 1760s.

It is likely that Beattie perceived his youthful political and social commentary as too dated, (though he remained a staunch Whig throughout his life) and too negative toward the memory of a government which had bestowed honour and an annual pension upon him, to be included in his later editions. This desire to condemn to ignominy his politically charged poems is supported by his exclusion of his attack upon the memory of Reverend Charles Churchill. His decision to exclude “The Triumph of Melancholy” from his later editions exemplifies his altered opinion of the effects of melancholy and solitude upon the imagination. The poem deals with melancholy’s effect upon the mind, and investigates its place within the poetic imagination and the consequences of indulgence in such a state.

⁴⁵² Sir William Forbes reprinted both poems in the Appendix to his Life so they would not be lost. W. Forbes, 1:50-51.

The melancholy and solitude which once inspired his poetic imagination is investigated in his early ode, but Beattie's beliefs concerning the consequences of indulgence in these forces changed dramatically in his later life. His remarks in a letter to Elizabeth Montagu demonstrate his altered perceptions, as well as the melancholia which was the fashion when he composed much of his early poetry:

My admiration of Thomson's poetry and sentiments, and the intoxication produced by the melancholy strains of Young, made me admire also the style and composition of those authors; which you know, Madam, is very unclassical, at least in the Seasons and the Night-thoughts.⁴⁵³

Thomas Gray's "An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751) marks the climax of melancholy as a genre, but later in the century melancholy poetry was criticised as "dangerous to society, [and] an excessive manifestation of 'self-love'"⁴⁵⁴ and its continued use as a literary trope might have appeared of questionable taste to the older Beattie. He had by this time resolved that melancholy and solitude are harmful to the mind because they detract from the daily operations of life, and he wished to reinforce his own personal piety and virtue.⁴⁵⁵ Some of the sentiments in this poem are also explored in "The Hermit," for example, as showing the negative impact of melancholy and solitude upon day to day operations of life, contrasted with its inspirational impact upon the imagination.⁴⁵⁶ In this early ode, melancholy overpowers the speaker, and the negative aspects of melancholy are unresolved, but the version of "The Hermit" Beattie includes in his later editions resolves this

⁴⁵³ Beattie to Elizabeth Montagu, 20 April 1778. Beattie, *Correspondence* 3:60-63. Also found in M. Forbes, 143.

⁴⁵⁴ Amy Reed, *The Background of Gray's Elegy: A Study in the Taste for Melancholy Poetry 1700-1751* (New York: Russell, 1962) 250.

⁴⁵⁵ This is in opposition to the idea of early poets of the century, who favoured solitude because "the contemplation of nature is good for the soul, inducing actual virtue, love of God, and benevolence towards man." Reed, 250.

⁴⁵⁶ See pp. 130-32.

issue through a confidence in Christianity and its powers of comfort and consolation.

“Elegy” (which is the revised “Elegy Occasioned by the Death of a Lady”), is the only memorial poem from Beattie’s early collections to be included in the later collections. Beattie alters the title so that it is not obvious that it is the poem which was written in honour of Lord Monboddo’s sister Elizabeth Burnet. This memorial poem ends with a strong overt conviction in the consolation of the Christian afterlife- something the other earlier memorial poems do not share. In this respect it is similar to the new epitaph for Elizabeth Gregory, which banishes the doubts of Beattie’s early poetry with an innate confidence in Christianity. He does not include his own epitaph; possibly he considered its inclusion an illustration of vanity and melancholy rather than poetic power.⁴⁵⁷

He also omits the early poem originally titled “Elegy,” which investigated the effectiveness of Christian doctrines as an antidote for the pain of loss, and the “Epitaph on Two Brothers”⁴⁵⁸ which was inspired by the tragic death of two brothers in the neighbourhood. These ruminations in his early memorial poems conflict with his conviction in the consolation of Christianity and the public character which Beattie wishes to preserve in these later volumes. His decision to eliminate his early memorial poems from these collections reflects his desire to preserve his public image as a serious poet and a devout Christian. This motivation is reflected in the fact that, while he eliminates much of his early poetry, Beattie includes both of the fables in his later editions.

⁴⁵⁷ Gray’s “Elegy” as published; not in the Eton MS. ends with a poet’s melancholy epitaph, which Beattie echoes in his own poem, and reinforces the connection between melancholy and the poetic imagination which inspired Beattie in his youth. See pp. 45-46.

⁴⁵⁸ This poem was only included in Beattie’s first volume of poetry, probably to reinforce his status as a serious poet and a public voice, see pp. 46-47.

In his Life, William Forbes questions Beattie's reasons for including "The Hares: A Fable" in his later editions, remarking that it is "a poem which seems to possess little other merit than smooth versification and a faultless moral."⁴⁵⁹ "The Hares" as presented in 1776 is significantly shortened from the 1766 volume, and eight lines are added to the end to reinforce the Christian nature of their resolution. No significant alterations are made to the text after this initial revision for the '76 edition, and so my textual comparisons in this case will focus on this first revision versus the first published version. Beattie begins by cutting the first thirty-eight lines of the poem from the earlier version, (most notably the echo of "My Own Epitaph"⁴⁶⁰) and removing many lines throughout the narrative. The editing enables the plot to develop easily, and in one case changes the overall thematic nature of the poem.

One passage in particular exemplifies the kind of changes Beattie made to the poem generally, by reinforcing the conviction in Christian values, and toning down the suicidal bent of the hares. The revised stanza focuses on the promise of peace in the eternal afterlife promised by Christianity,⁴⁶¹ while the earlier version addresses the antagonistic relationship between the hares and nature's forces. Nature is characterised as a benevolent force, which inclines creatures towards the lesser evil: "'Tis Nature bids us dare to die, / And disappoint our destiny" (185-86). The council of hares choose suicide as an alternative to living in fear of predators. In the revised passage this relationship is more explicit: "No. Be the smaller ill our choice: / "So dictates Nature's powerful voice" (127-28). The fable and moral of "The Hares" remains the same; the revisions reflect Beattie's desire to make the themes, rather than the images, the reader's focus. He removes superfluous images that do not advance the plot or themes, and strengthens the hares' conviction of the promised Christian afterlife, which is unattainable through suicide.

⁴⁵⁹ Forbes, 1:49.

⁴⁶⁰ See pp. 48-49.

⁴⁶¹ See Appendix pp. 327-28 for the stanzas in their entirety.

“Pymæo-gerano-machia: The Battle of the Pygmies and Cranes” is also revised from its earlier version, but the changes are not as significant as those made to its predecessor. The revisions are primarily to the diction, and strengthen the images while making the action sequences more sympathetic. An example of this kind of revision is the depiction of the pygmies preparing for war: they “Couch’d the long quivering lance, and grasp’d the shield; / They form the glittering lines, and lengthening far, / Well ranged in firm array, await the war” (95-97). The revised passage remains true to the intent of the original, but brings the action into the present tense, which builds suspense in the reader for the impending battle: “And grasp the shield, and couch the quivering lance; / To right and left the lengthening lines they form, / And rank’d in deep array await the storm” (99-100). Few substantive changes are made to the poem, evidence that the high opinion Beattie had of the poem upon its completion was not affected by his changing attitude toward poetry.

New Poems in Poems on Several Occasions (1776)

“Epistle to the Honourable C.B.” is the first new poem in the edition, though it is dated 1766. The subject of the poem, Charles Boyd, was the second son of the Earl of Kilmarnock, and the younger brother of Beattie’s patron the Earl of Erroll. The “Epistle” represents Beattie’s desire to illustrate his light-hearted poetic abilities, though Beattie attempts to dissuade his noble correspondent from a poetic career. Its obvious message is a humorous explanation for Beattie’s delay in waiting upon its subject, but Beattie’s desire to warn Boyd against poetic ambition pervades the poem. In this poem Beattie essentially warns Boyd concerning the criticism and inevitable strife of a poetic career which he mentions in

“An Epistle, to the Reverend Mr. Thomas Blacklock.”⁴⁶² According to William Forbes, Boyd “was master too of no inconsiderable portion of humour, and had some turn for making verse.”⁴⁶³ This affinity for poetry no doubt prompted Boyd to introduce himself to Beattie through a verse epistle, which prompted Beattie’s polite but significant caution to Boyd concerning his poetic ambition. The poem opens by praising its subject’s character, and establishes him in pastoral scenery reminiscent of Virgilian swains: “Whence he looks down with pity on the great; / And, midst the groves retired, at leisure wooes / Domestick love, contentment, and the Muse” (4-6). The next stanza rehearses many mythical means of transport (the wings designed by Dedalus and the winged horse Pegasus) but makes a significant distinction between ancient vehicles and the fate of modern poets: “Such vehicles were common once, no doubt; / But modern versemen must even trudge on foot, / Or doze at home, expectants of the gout” (23-25). The juxtaposition of these ancient noble images with the reality of life for eighteenth-century poets is a significant moment in the poem, because it illustrates Beattie’s quiet desire to dissuade Boyd from romanticising the status of contemporary poets. The poem then shows Boyd the difficulty for poets to maintain a separate persona in daily life: “Hard is the task, indeed ’tis wonderous hard / To act the Hier, yet preserve the Bard” (26-27).⁴⁶⁴ These lines present in a comical style the conflict Beattie perceived between pragmatic necessity and the desire for a poetic career, and foreshadow the conflict between philosophical reasoning and poetic imagination Beattie articulated in a letter to Boyd later that year.

⁴⁶² See pp. 82-84 for details of this poem.

⁴⁶³ W. Forbes, 1:92.

⁴⁶⁴ The reference to this word reads: “One who keeps horses to let is so called in Scotland. See Johnson’s dictionary.”

Though he warns Boyd against a poetic career, he still wishes for natural scenery to inspire both speaker and subject: “And (for I know the Muse will come along) / To B*** I mean to meditate a song: / A song, adorn’d with every rural charm” (50-52). Beattie reinforces the influence of nature upon his poetic imagination by situating his composition in an unspoilt setting, the kind of setting which inspired his early poetry. The final stanza invokes an image of classical delicacies laid upon a banquet table, which the speaker would renounce if it meant the favour of his subject’s company. He resolves that “If B*** be happy, and in health, his guest, / Whom wit and learning charm, can wish no better feast” (66-67).

This final stanza praises Boyd for his learning and his nobility as a host, reinforcing the gratitude being expressed in the poem for hospitality offered to the speaker. The ending highlights the muted nature of the panegyric element of the poem, since Beattie implies that poetry should not be an act of self-glorification. Though it is somewhat veiled, Beattie’s intention in the poem is clearly to warn Boyd of the dangers of poetic ambition. The poem also highlights Beattie’s frustrations as a professional poet. While he publicly reasoned that the poem was included in the 1776 edition to prove his lighter poetic powers, this poem is another example of Beattie’s desire to publicly recognise his patrons, and those whose influence or approbation has assisted his poetic or professional career.

“Epitaph: Being Part of an Inscription for a Monument to be Erected by a Gentleman to the Memory of his Lady” was composed by Beattie in honour of Dr. Gregory’s wife Elizabeth. The poem is in the style of Beattie’s early memorial poetry in OPT, and is similar to “Elegy” in content. The poem opens by rehearsing the virtues of the lady, “Farewell my best beloved; whose heavenly mind / Genius with virtue, strength with softness join’d; / Devotion, undebased by pride or art” (1-3). The poem then shifts to the unrivalled virtues of the lady in both private and public life: “Unblamed, unequalled, in each sphere of life, /

The tenderest Daughter, Sister, Parent, Wife. / In thee their Patronness th' afflicted lost;" (7-9) which builds sympathy for these men and women who must continue to live without the beloved person.

The final four lines are important because they echo sentiments prevalent in Beattie's other memorial poems, and significantly lack an affirmation of the Christian consolation:

And I—but ah, can words my loss declare,
Or paint th' extremes of transport and despair!
O Thou, beyond what verse or speech can tell,
My guide, my friend, my best beloved, farewell! (11-14).

The earlier version of this poem written in a letter to Dr. Gregory concludes with two lines not found in any subsequent text: "Farewell a while! These days of trouble o'er, / We soon shall meet again, to part no more."⁴⁶⁵ These lines were inserted on the advice of Dr. Gregory, and Beattie's reasoning for removing them highlights his altered view of Christian consolation: "the immortality of the soul, and the continuation of the friendship of the pious thro' all the periods of a future existence, being points so fundamental among Christians, that they may be always supposed, whether expressed or not, to form a part of every meditation of this kind."⁴⁶⁶ Beattie's earlier memorial poetry does not share this later conviction; indeed, the other poem meant for a public monument amongst Beattie's memorial poetry, "Epitaph on Two Brothers" states his early desire to take comfort in the certainty of the Christian afterlife. The sentiments of that poem's final lines, "They liv'd united, and united died; / Happy the friends, whom Death cannot divide!" (25-26) he publicly affirms his conviction in the

⁴⁶⁵ Beattie to John Gregory, 20 December 1770. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:131-33.

⁴⁶⁶ Beattie to John Gregory, 20 December 1770. Beattie, *Correspondence* 2:131-33.

Christian consolation which his early memorial poems question.⁴⁶⁷

The following poem commemorates a birth, and illustrates Beattie's continuing connection to his patron the Earl of Erroll as well as the influence of the poetry of Thomas Gray. "Ode on Lord Hay's Birth-day" was composed to commemorate the birth of George Hay,⁴⁶⁸ and is in the metre of Thomas Gray's "Ode on the Spring." The inclusion of the poem in the 1776 volume further reinforces Beattie's connection to his patron James Hay, and his desire to immortalise his gratitude to him. The poem is eliminated from the later collections, possibly because by their publication the son whose birth he honoured in the poem had succeeded to the Earldom. The poem was printed privately for the family shortly after its composition⁴⁶⁹ and Beattie also sent a copy of the text to Thomas Gray.

It was subsequently printed in the Edinburgh Magazine and Review in 1773 along with "The Hermit" prior to its inclusion in the 1776 edition,⁴⁷⁰ but there is no reference to this publication in Beattie's letters, so it is unclear whether the periodical publication had Beattie's authority. "The Hermit" might have been published as an enticement and to build anticipation for the forthcoming Second Book of The Minstrel, since the poems are similar in theme and subject. The public display of the "Ode" was probably intended to reinforce Beattie's connection to his patron, and to celebrate the nobility of Lord Hay and his family.

⁴⁶⁷ Examples of this can be found in "The Hermit" which Beattie revised for POSO: "I have added two stanza's to the Hermit, and made him conclude like a Christian. I have really a tolerable good opinion of that piece." Beattie to Sir William Forbes, 16 November 1776. Beattie, Correspondence 3:33.

⁴⁶⁸ George Hay (1767-98) succeeded his father as the sixteenth Earl of Erroll in 1778: see Correspondence of Thomas Gray, ed. Paget Toynbee and Leonard Whibley 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1935) 3:983.

⁴⁶⁹ Lady Erroll made a gift of the poem to James Boswell and Samuel Johnson when they visited Slains Castle in August 1773, which supports the hypothesis that it was printed privately shortly after its composition, although no copies of this publication survive. Boswell's Life of Johnson 5:105.

⁴⁷⁰ This information is taken from Boswell's Life of Johnson 5:499.

Thomas Gray writes to Beattie in December of 1767 praising the poem, commenting that “the diction is easy & noble. The texture of the thoughts lyrick & the versification harmonious.”⁴⁷¹ Gray makes insightful comments into the mechanics of the poem, and his praise of it could also have led Beattie to include it in his 1776 volume, since he valued Gray’s poetic criticism highly. Beattie’s use of Gray’s metre from the “Ode on the Spring,” gives the poem an easy lyrical movement, and the simple diction characterise the speaker as a natural poet. The employment of this persona disguises his personal motivations for composing the poem, and allows him to praise his patron while building the poem as a genuine and simple panegyric, rather than an artful device to further his poetical career. Beattie’s ode depicts the possibility of future prosperity promised by the child as an antidote to the inevitable decay of human life which Gray deals with in the “Ode on the Spring.”

The opening of the panegyric reinforces this notion by invoking a simple unrehearsed muse, to reinforce the virtue of the youth and his lineage. The speaker invokes “A Muse, unskill’d in venal praise, / Unstain’d with flattery’s art; / Who loves simplicity of lays” (1-3). Here Beattie makes a deliberate attempt to mask the poem’s main purpose of honouring a patron whose influence has been beneficial to his career. The opening introduces the speaker as an untaught poet whose lay is inspired by a rural muse. It is reminiscent of the “Ode on the Spring,” which also depicts a rural muse amidst the budding rejuvenation of spring: “Beside some water’s rushy brink / With me the Muse shall sit, and think / (At ease reclin’d in rustic state)” (15-17). This initial statement is essential, because the poem then shifts to a rehearsal of the nobility and virtue of the Hay family, and becomes didactic in its sentiments for the future behaviour of the family.

⁴⁷¹ Gray, Correspondence 3:983-4.

The next stanza rehearses the nobility of the child's family, by depicting their defence of their nation in battle: "For not on beds of gaudy flowers / Thine ancestors reclined" (11-12), but rather "To stem the deluge of war, / And snatch from fate a sinking land" (16-17). This invocation of the family's military history could be problematic,⁴⁷² but Beattie focuses upon their ancient nobility and their long period of prosperity. This defence of their ancient land justifies their current position, despite the treasonous actions of the recent past. The poem continues by recounting in general terms the benevolence of the family with regard to the common people on their lands, and the subject shifts to universal didacticism which is present in much of Beattie's early poetry. This section presents Beattie's continuing preoccupation with the necessity of sympathy and compassion versus luxury and material wealth:

Ye Sons of Luxury be wise;
 Know, happiness for ever flies
 The cold and solitary breast;
 Then let the social instinct glow,
 And learn to feel another's woe,
 And in his joy be bless'd (45-50).

This denial of ambition and wealth is reminiscent of the "Ode to Peace," in which luxury and temporal ambition lead to destruction of nature and virtue.⁴⁷³ While the earlier ode ends with no resolution of the conflict between ambition and virtue, these lines present compassion and sympathy as the virtuous solutions to the vices of ambition and material desire.

⁴⁷² George Hay's grandfather, the fourth Earl of Kilmarnock, had been executed as a Jacobite rebel in 1746.

⁴⁷³ See pp. 24-28.

The poem then shifts to particular blessings for the child, and in the final stanza the speaker reverts back to a didactic tone, this time celebrating the natural world as well as the simple environment of his tenants. The speaker highlights the importance of nature to the growth of the mind, and the positive force of the simple life upon the mind: "Let not thy towering mind despise / The village and the grove" (73-74). The final lines reinforce these sentiments concerning the values of nature: "For Innocence with angel smile, / Simplicity that knows not guile, / And Love and Peace are there" (78-80). The pastoral image these final lines invoke is reminiscent of the final lines of "The Hares," which reinforce the positive influence of nature.⁴⁷⁴ The ending of the poem recalls the invocation of the natural untaught muse of the opening, and the innocence and potential of the newborn subject.

"The Hermit" is situated in scenery reminiscent of that of Edwin's first introduction to the Hermit in The Minstrel, but there are a number of important differences between the two speakers. Unlike the Hermit Edwin meets, the speaker of this poem is investigating the consequences of the human condition. The Hermit of The Minstrel is introduced as a jaded poet whose experiences are meant to curb the young Edwin's imaginative instincts. The character of the Hermit of this poem is preoccupied solely with the mutable fate of man versus the rejuvenating character of nature. Beattie also sent this poem to Thomas Gray shortly after its composition. Gray recognises within it the sentiments of the sublime in nature which inspired Beattie's early poetry: "the sentiments are such as a melancholy imagination naturally suggests in solitude & silence, & that (tho' light & business may suspend or banish them at times) return with but so much the greater force upon a feeling heart."⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴ See p. 50.

⁴⁷⁵ Gray, 3:974.

The Hermit's character is initially introduced with a clear separation between intellect and emotion: "A Hermit his song of the night thus began; / No more with himself or with nature at war, / He thought as a Sage, while he felt as a Man" (6-8). Line six is altered for the final '84 edition,⁴⁷⁶ which eliminates the reference to night and reinforces the Hermit's character as a poet with more eloquent diction. King argues that "The hermit intrudes into the evening solitude, showing the tension between man's desires and his inevitable failure and thus the need to seek atonement in nature,"⁴⁷⁷ but there is no evidence in the poem that the Hermit is invading the scene in which the poem opens; on the contrary, he is inspired by the sublime environment of the evening, and throughout the rest of the poem he recognises the difference between humanity's inevitable decay, and the cyclical natural world around him. Rather than seeking to make amends with nature, the Hermit is seeking consolation for the mutable nature of man and laments the inevitable pain of human life, which he contrasts with the continual cycle of death and rebirth in nature. King also argues that "The hermit has become a sage because in gaining the joy and perfect recompense of nature's solitude he has achieved a balance between intellect and emotion,"⁴⁷⁸ but there is nothing in the poem to suggest that the Hermit's solitude has had this kind of impact. The rest of the poem is spoken by the Hermit, and his laments recall the speech of Beattie's aged poet in *The Minstrel*.⁴⁷⁹

The Hermit begins by celebrating the cyclical aspects of nature, which highlights the mutable aspects of human life: "Why thus, lonely Philomel, flows thy sad strain? / For Spring shall return, and a lover bestow" (10-11). For the '84 edition the allusion to the nightingale is altered from a question concerning its song to one that depicts its sorrow and weakness,

⁴⁷⁶ "While his harp rung symphonious, a Hermit began" (6).

⁴⁷⁷ Everard King, "James Beattie's *Retirement* and *The Hermit*: Two Early Romantic poems," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 72 (1973): 581.

⁴⁷⁸ King, "Retirement" 581.

⁴⁷⁹ That Hermit deals with the inevitable pain caused by ambition and a desire for temporal wealth by recounting his own desires and their negative impact upon his mind. See Book II, stanzas X-XX.

drawing on the established literary conventions associated with it: “Why, lone Philomela, that languishing fall?” (10).⁴⁸⁰ This change makes the line flow more naturally into the next line,⁴⁸¹ and reinforces the allusion to rebirth, which will be contrasted with the inevitability and permanence of human death. This permanence is reinforced by the parallel the poem draws between nature’s cycle and the progression of human life. The natural world will continue to die and be reborn as long as life continues, but man is separated from the natural world because of his impermanence, without the possibility of eternal rejuvenation: “Mourn, sweetest Complainer, Man calls thee to mourn: / O soothe him, whose pleasures like thine pass away— / Full quickly they pass, – but they never return” (14-16). The transience of humanity’s temporal pleasures is compared with the perpetual state of nature, as well as nature’s indifference to humanity’s situation. This theme is more fully explored in the following stanza by acknowledging the aspects of the natural world which separate humans from the world around them. This stanza returns to nature, building the image of the waxing and waning moon to “Roll on thou fair orb, and with gladness pursue / The path that conducts thee to splendour again.— / But Man’s faded glory no change shall renew.”⁴⁸² / Ah fool! To exult in a glory so vain!” (21-24). The subtle change to line 23 for the 1784 edition shifts from a pessimistic tone to an optimistic one, which foreshadows the new final stanzas that Beattie added to the poem to reinforce the Christian faith of the Hermit.

These negative consequences of melancholy and solitude are introduced but not resolved in this ode, but in “The Hermit” daylight banishes these phantoms.⁴⁸³ The depressed sentiments concerning the human condition when compared to the death and rebirth in nature is fully developed in the following stanza, which was originally the end of the poem, until

⁴⁸⁰ See Akenside, *Odes*, 1.15.

⁴⁸¹ “For Spring shall return, and a lover bestow,” (11).

⁴⁸² Line in 1784 edition reads: “But Man’s faded glory what change shall renew.”

⁴⁸³ The Christian afterlife is characterised as eternal daylight in “The Minstrel”: “O when shall that Eternal Morn appear, / These dreadful forms to chase, this chaos dark to clear!” (179-80).

Beattie added two stanzas for the version to be included in POSO to make the Hermit console himself in the hope of the Christian afterlife. In the new final stanzas of “The Hermit” the speaker overcomes the depression introduced in “The Triumph of Melancholy” by building confidence in the certainty of the Christian afterlife.

The Hermit’s speech articulates his depressed spirits while reinforcing the contrast between man and nature. He begins by recognising that the natural world present around him will continue to be deformed by night, and rejuvenated by day: “I mourn, but, ye woodlands, I mourn not for you; / For morn is approaching, your charms to restore” (26-27). The division between night and day is also important in The Minstrel, where night works fitfully upon the imagination, and its apparitions are banished by daylight.⁴⁸⁴ He then turns to nature’s never ending cycle of seasons: “Nor yet for the ravage of winter I mourn; / Kind Nature the embryo blossom will save.—” (29-30). Man, however, is exempt from this cycle of death and rebirth, which permanently separates him from the natural world in which he lives.

The Hermit’s recognition of this state, and the depression which it causes, is clear in the climactic final two lines of this stanza, in which the Hermit laments his own impending death, to which nature is entirely indifferent: “But when shall spring visit the mouldering urn! / O when shall it dawn on the night of the grave!” (31-32).⁴⁸⁵ The Hermit finds no solace from the impermanence of human life, and is left with a lingering notion that nature has a better kind of existence, because death leads to rebirth rather than an end. This section evokes strong emotions from the reader, because it presents the human dilemma without any

⁴⁸⁴ The imaginative power of night is invoked in Book I stanza XXXIII and is banished by the daylight in stanza XXXVI of The Minstrel.

⁴⁸⁵ The power of nature to console humanity is also questioned in “The Triumph of Melancholy:” “Say, can ye cheer pale Sickness’ gloomy bed, / Or dry the tears that bathe the untimely urn?” (67-68).

confidence in a better state.⁴⁸⁶ This ending is reminiscent of Beattie's early memorial poetry, in which he questions the power of Christian consolation and the possibility of an eternal afterlife.⁴⁸⁷ The revisions made to this poem show Beattie's desire to banish the doubts that were prevalent in his early poetry, so he adds two new stanzas to the poem which are intended to "make him [the Hermit] conclude like a Christian," rather than ending the poem without a firm resolution of his Hermit's questions.

The answer to the pervading question of the poem comes in the two new final stanzas, which allude to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which enabled Christians to defeat death through the promise of an eternal afterlife. The first new stanza begins with the speaker recounting the allurements of worldly explanations for the process of life/death without any hope of a future state, and addresses similar arguments to those which Beattie battled in the Essay on Truth: "'Twas thus, by the glare of false Science betray'd / That leads, to bewilder; and dazzles to blind;" (33-34). The poem upbraids the kind of scientific investigation that defies religious doctrines and seeks pragmatic explanations for humanity and nature.

The speaker believes that it is only through God's mercy that he is saved from the consequences of this kind of science: "O pity, great father of light," then I cry'd" "Lo, humbled in dust, I relinquish my pride: / From doubt and from darkness thou only canst free" (39-40). The humility displayed at the end of this stanza is essential to the resolution of the poem, in which the Hermit trumps the poem's earlier laments with confidence in the peace and happiness promised by the Christian faith. In the final stanza, the confidence in God has banished the woes of the earlier stanzas, is heralded by the approach of day, and this, which:

...breaks on the traveller, faint, and astray,

⁴⁸⁶ Boswell notes the effect of this particular stanza upon Samuel Johnson: "so much was he affected by pathetick poetry, that, when he was reading Dr. Beattie's 'Hermit' in my presence, it brought tears into his eyes." Boswell, 4:186.

⁴⁸⁷ Beattie asks the same question in "An Elegy, Occasioned by the Death of a Lady" and "Elegy." See pp. 42-44 and 47-48.

The bright and the balmy effluence of morn.
 See Truth, Love, and Mercy, in triumph decending,
 And Nature all glowing in Eden's first bloom!
 On the cold cheek of Death smiles and roses are blending
 And Beauty immortal awakes from the tomb (43-48).

The images refer to the perfection of Eden and the final line refers to the resurrection of Christ which makes salvation possible. Beattie added this confidence in Christian consolation to the poem for its publication, which further exemplifies his desire to banish his earlier poetic indecisiveness concerning the effectiveness of the Christian afterlife as an antidote to human suffering. Clearly "The Hermit," "achieves an unusually fine blending of emotion and thought about life and death with a newly conceived natural setting,"⁴⁸⁸ and creates a sympathetic, and at times interrupted, relationship between man and nature which will occupy the imaginations of poets that will follow.

In sum, Beattie's professional success as a philosopher and educator demanded a study of metaphysics which he associated with the deterioration of his health and, he believed, depressed his imaginative powers. His poetic success with The Minstrel brought him prosperity and acquaintance with the eminent literary minds of his day, but the illness and eventual removal of his wife from their home depressed his spirits. In the later years of his poetic career he sought to preserve his poetic reputation, which he did by publicly denouncing much of his early poetry and editing for the final time those works which he wished to preserve as his poetic legacy. The new poems he includes in the '76 collection reinforce his lively poetic imagination and his desire to preserve his reputation as a poet of energy and enthusiasm for nature.

⁴⁸⁸ King, "Retirement," 583.

Chapter 6: Education and Reflection: Beattie's Later Prose Works

Beattie's numerous prose works represent the final phase of his public career, and further illustrate his desire to leave a lasting positive contribution to his society. They were revised and published during a time when Beattie's health was deteriorating and his household under increasing stress. Upon the birth of their second son, Montagu, in 1778 Mary Beattie's mental health deteriorated, and by 1781 she was permanently removed from the household.⁴⁸⁹ Many of the essays were originally composed as lectures to his students, or as discourses to be read to the Aberdeen Philosophical Society.⁴⁹⁰ While the majority of these discourses were composed from the late 1760s to the early 1770s, it is clear from Beattie's letters that he took considerable care to revise and enlarge them before publication.

Revising and preparing the essays for publication probably distracted his mind from the melancholy of his household, and allowed him to make one final contribution to society. The corpus of essays articulate Beattie's ideas concerning a wide variety of topics, and so for the purposes of this study it is necessary to choose from these works those which are relevant to Beattie's poetry, and those that illustrate his interest in literary criticism. The essays are also intimately connected to Beattie's overall philosophical system, as elements of it are expressed in a variety of ways throughout the chosen essays. In addition to the essays, Beattie collected *Scoticisms*, in an attempt to correct young writers in their usage and illustrate the particular Scottish nature of the words. This reference book illustrates Beattie's desire for correct usage of language and his attitude toward 'Scots dialect' as well as his preoccupation

⁴⁸⁹ Mary Beattie's condition and whereabouts were a constant anxiety to Beattie, and as her condition worsened he was afraid to have her in the same neighbourhood. It is seemingly poignant that at the time of her removal he was most likely composing his essay "On the Attachments of the Kindred," which deals with the responsibilities entailed in married life.

⁴⁹⁰ See H. Lewis Ulman, ed., *The Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society: 1758-1773* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP, 1990).

with the disadvantage the Scots faced when writing and conversing in English. This collection, along with Beattie's only poem in the Scots dialect, "To Mr. Alexander Ross," illustrates Beattie's attitude toward this native dialect and presents an interesting context for his collection of Scottish words.

It is the style of the essays that sets them apart from contemporary discourses; in a letter to Elizabeth Montagu he acknowledges the lack of novelty of his arguments, but also explains the motivation behind these projects: "On subjects that have been so often discussed, it is not easy to devise any thing new, in the way of either doctrine or illustration: my chief purpose was to be intelligible, and (if possible) entertaining, and moral."⁴⁹¹ The essays present many commonly held ideas but do so in a simple articulate style, which Beattie worried would bring them little commercial success.⁴⁹² Despite his anxieties, the reviews of the Essays "praised the essays and Beattie's style and approach"⁴⁹³ and while many reviews of Dissertations Moral and Critical (1783) were not wholly favourable, even the staunch critic Gilbert Stuart "acknowledged that the essays were 'enlivened by many pleasing scenes and anecdotes, and written in a stile, unaffected, simple, and perspicuous.'"⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹¹ Beattie to Elizabeth Montagu, 3 April 1777. Beattie, Correspondence 3:53-56.

⁴⁹² He explains in a letter to Elizabeth Montagu: "I am afraid the plainness and simplicity of the style will not hit the taste of the present race of orators and criticks." Beattie to Elizabeth Montagu 30 January 1783. Beattie, Correspondence 3:161-65.

⁴⁹³ Roger Robinson, introduction, Essays: On Poetry and Music, by James Beattie (London: Thoemmes-Routledge, 1996), xxvi.

⁴⁹⁴ Roger Robinson, introduction, Dissertations Moral and Critical, by James Beattie (London: Thoemmes-Routledge, 1996), xxi.

The first two essays, “On Poetry and Music as They Affect the Mind” and “On Laughter and Ludicrous Composition,” were published with the sixth edition of the Essay on Truth in an octavo volume in 1776.⁴⁹⁵ The former addresses many current topics concerning poetry: the role of the poet and poetical composition, poetic genius, poetry’s relation to music, and the use and propriety of poetical language. It is “the culmination of the long debate over the conditions and principles which best unite poetry and music, showing the complexity of the problem as it forces the critic to draw upon new developments such as the notion of music as a means of communication and the theory of the association of ideas.”⁴⁹⁶ The unity of poetry and music which Beattie makes is unique in eighteenth-century criticism. Poetry and painting were usually considered the “sister arts,” and so Beattie is more closely aligned in this essay to the Romantic authors who followed. The “Essay on Laughter” critiques the philosophical arguments concerning laughter and ridicule of Thomas Hobbes, Francis Hutcheson, and Mark Akenside. Beattie also investigates the ideas or qualities in objects that provoke laughter, and the elements needed to produce laughter, and examines the similarities and differences between ridicule and satire.

The final three essays I will examine were published in Dissertations Moral and Critical, which is an expanded form of Beattie’s lectures to his students, and written in the same style as the formerly mentioned essays. “Of Memory and Imagination” makes a clear distinction between memory and imagination, and establishes the purview of each faculty, as well as particular qualities of each, exploring how their function can be improved, as well as utilised by an individual in daily activities. “On Fable and Romance” is a prime example of literary criticism among Beattie’s essays; it deals with the difference between ancient and

⁴⁹⁵ James Beattie, Essays.: On the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism. On Poetry and Music, as they Affect the Mind. On laughter, and Ludicrous Composition. On the Utility of Classical Learning (Edinburgh: Creech, 1776).

⁴⁹⁶ Everard King, “Literary Essays” 206.

modern fable, and the labels the five characteristics of chivalry. “Illustrations on Sublimity” identifies the general characteristics of the sublime in nature and their effect upon the mind. Beattie intended these essays to be introductions to these various topics for young people on the verge of entering university, and so their language is simple and direct.

Beattie’s essay “On Fable and Romance” owes a debt to the arguments of Richard Hurd’s “Letters on Chivalry and Romance” (1762) concerning the characteristics of chivalric knights,⁴⁹⁷ but diverges from this source in its assessment of the value of gothic romance and the use by modern authors of this genre. The essay also investigates fable as utilised in the modern novel, and argues that moderns have surpassed the ancients in this species of writing. “Illustrations on Sublimity” situates the sublime within a moral framework, establishes criteria upon which sublimity in all things should be judged, and illustrates the way in which the sublime can be distinguished from other powerful reactions to objects that occur either in nature or in reproductions based on natural objects. Beattie’s argument is reminiscent of his predecessor John Dennis, who in The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry (1704) argues that poetry has an inherent moral purpose, and develops the notion of the sublime in terms of an objects ability to inspire religious passion.

⁴⁹⁷ Beattie acknowledges borrowings from Hurd concerning the character of chivalric knights, such as their religious devotion and responsibility to defend friends and ladies. See Beattie’s footnotes, pp. 539 and 543-44.

Essays: On Poetry and Music, As they Affect the Mind; On Laughter and Ludicrous Composition; On the Utility of Classical Learning (1776)

Beattie explains his proposed plan for the essay “On Poetry and Music” in a letter to Robert Arbuthnot, in which he outlines the three main topics of the essay. The essay follows the structure which Beattie explicates in this letter (to Arbuthnot), and his abstract introduces the philosophical approach Beattie will take to support his propositions throughout the essay. He outlines the arguments of the essay in the following terms:

The first part contains a philosophical inquiry into the nature of poetry in general, considered as an imitation of nature, by means of language [the second concerns] principles which determine the degrees of our approbation in the imitative arts [and the third deals with] the several kinds of poetry, with a view to these principles, and to determine their comparative excellence.⁴⁹⁸

The essay thus follows the pattern which Beattie explained to Arbuthnot, and begins by defining criticism of poetry as a philosophical endeavour,⁴⁹⁹ a start which is intended to illustrate the differences between poetry and other forms of composition. Beattie opens the section on poetry with a clarification of the purpose of poetry. He acquiesces in the standard view that instruction is an important purpose of poetry, but makes the case for pleasure as the primary goal of poetical composition. He argues that: “pleasure is undoubtedly the immediate aim of all those artifices by which poetry is distinguished from other composition.”⁵⁰⁰ He then clarifies this argument by illustrating that instruction is an artifice employed by poets to enhance the reader’s pleasure.

⁴⁹⁸ Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, 28 December 1762. Beattie, *Correspondence* 1:6. Also in W. Forbes, 1:64.

⁴⁹⁹ “true Poetry is a thing perfectly rational and regular; and nothing can be more strictly philosophical, than that part of criticism may and ought to be, which unfolds the general characters that distinguish it from other kinds of composition.” Beattie, *Essays* 4.

⁵⁰⁰ Beattie, *Essays* 9.

This is an integral part of the general purpose for poetry which Beattie is building, and he further argues that the instruction of poetry is essential because it gratifies the reader's moral sense: "Poetry, therefore, that is uninstructional, or immoral, cannot please those who retain any moral sensibility, or uprightness of judgement; and must consequently displease the greater part of any regular society of rational creatures."⁵⁰¹ Since Beattie's system champions instruction as an important element of pleasure he then clarifies what he means by instruction, which also has an intrinsically moral purpose.

In his system, "whatever tends to raise those human affections that are favourable to truth and virtue, or to repress the opposite passions, will always gratify and improve our moral and intellectual powers, and may properly be called instructive."⁵⁰² However, songs and pastorals are said to be immune from any moral purpose, since their sentiments are indifferent to vice and virtue alike, they reflect the moral sentiments of nature, which they are intended to reproduce.⁵⁰³ Beattie defends this particular part of his argument against the claim that it is in direct opposition to the views of Horace in Ars Poetica. While Horace argues that poetry should please and instruct, Beattie illustrates through numerous passages that his arguments concerned the Greek and Roman writers and the poetry of the stage. Beattie advances an interpretation of Horace that fits his theory of poetry: "Horace never meant to say, that instruction, as well as pleasure, is necessary to give any composition the poetical character."⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰¹ Beattie, Essays 13.

⁵⁰² Beattie, Essays 19.

⁵⁰³ Paraphrased from Beattie, Essays 24.

⁵⁰⁴ Beattie, Essays 26-27.

Beattie supports this supposition by highlighting the other elements essential to poetry: “pathos, and harmony, and elevated language, were, in Horace’s opinion, essential to poetry; and of these decorations no body will affirm, that instruction is the end, who considers that the most instructive books in the world are written in plain prose.”⁵⁰⁵ This is an interesting statement for Beattie to make, given his decision to abandon poetry for prose. The focus of the essay then shifts to poetic genius, and makes many arguments which underlie the themes of The Minstrel.

Beattie’s arguments concerning poetic genius operate on the assumption that his readers are familiar with the arguments made by Gerard and Young,⁵⁰⁶ and he acknowledges the contributions of their systems to the gloss he makes on this complicated topic. The investigation into poetic genius begins by identifying the pleasure which the poetic genius takes in nature, and argues that accurate observation of nature is essential to the development of poetic genius, because the poet’s work is an imitation of nature. According to Beattie, if poetry is to please it must be imitative of nature: “Poetry, therefore, and indeed every art whose end is to please, must be natural; and if so, must exhibit real matter of fact, or something like it; that is, in other words, must be either according to truth, or according to verisimilitude.”⁵⁰⁷ While poetry is imitative, Beattie upholds the capacity of the mind of the poet to recreate scenes inspired by nature that surpass the original in power, because “nothing sensible transcends, or equals the capacity of thought: — a striking evidence of the dignity of the human soul.”⁵⁰⁸ The essay then turns to the varying states of mind which are presented in the works of the poetic genius, thereby providing an interesting context for Beattie’s own poetic career.

⁵⁰⁵ Beattie, Essays 27.

⁵⁰⁶ See pp. 18-195 and 102-3 for a close examination of their works.

⁵⁰⁷ Beattie, Essays 33.

⁵⁰⁸ Beattie, Essays 46.

The variations of the mind of the poetic genius create a kind of portrait of the author, because they express in eloquent terms the turn of his mind upon particular topics or scenery: “We often see an author’s character in his works; and if every author were in earnest when he writes, we should oftener see it.”⁵⁰⁹ This self-portrayal in poetry is evident in Beattie’s own works, which range from occasional subjects to the intellectual process of poetic creation.

It is interesting that by this point in his career he had condemned his early poetical works, and declared the early stylised melancholy poems of his 1760 volume as meretricious and wished those copies still extant to be destroyed.⁵¹⁰ The essay then shifts to an examination of the nature of poetic character, and uses the characters from Homer’s *Iliad* to illustrate the positive and negative qualities required for a character to be labelled heroic. The section of the essay dealing with music explores the significance of music as an imitative art, and more specifically the necessity of words to evoke an aesthetic response.

The music which Beattie classifies as an imitative art “extends to those natural sounds and motions only, which are agreeable in themselves, consistent with melody and harmony, and associated with agreeable affections and sentiments.”⁵¹¹ Beattie further argues that the ability of music to evoke pathos and affections results from its relationship with language, because “the expression of music without poetry is vague and ambiguous; hence it is, that the same air may sometimes be repeated to every stanza of a long ode or ballad.”⁵¹² The essay then shifts focus to an investigation of the natural affinity of people to the music of their native land, regardless of its objective merit.

⁵⁰⁹ Beattie, *Essays* 50.

⁵¹⁰ See pp. 209-210 for more information on Beattie’s attitude in middle age toward his early poetry.

⁵¹¹ Beattie, *Essays* 128.

⁵¹² Beattie, *Essays* 147.

This is an important section, as Beattie expresses in prose sentiments which are prevalent in his corpus of poetry, and which present an interesting context for his later attitude towards his early work. Beattie believes that early associations are the most powerful and influential in the mind, and in his passage I believe he looks back upon his own emotions and ideas concerning the natural scenery of his youth, and recalls the scenery that inspired much of his early poetry.

Native music is more likely to evoke from a native hearer a significant nostalgia for the neighbourhood and scenes described, and so it evokes stronger sentiments and ideas than music foreign to the hearer's experience:

It is not their merit, which in the case supposed would interest a native, but the charming ideas they would recall to his mind:— ideas of innocence, simplicity, and leisure, of romantic enterprise, and enthusiastic attachment; and of scenes, which, on recollection, we are inclined to think, that a brighter sun illuminated, a fresher verdure crowned, and purer skies and happier climes conspired to beautify, than are now to be seen in the dreary paths of care and disappointment, into which men, yielding to the passions peculiar to more advanced years, are tempted to wander.⁵¹³

This passage transcends the topic of music and illustrates the nostalgia for youthful innocence which Beattie depicts in the first book of The Minstrel, which is starkly contrasted by the depiction of himself as the aged, serious minded Hermit who educates the young swain. The youthful scenery of a person's past is impressed vividly in the imagination, and acts as an antidote to the harsher, pragmatic concerns of middle age and daily life. Beattie then turns specifically to the music native to the Scottish highlands: this, he argues, is greatly influenced

⁵¹³ Beattie, Essays 162.

by the striking landscape and activities necessary for survival in that region. Beattie's descriptive passage evokes the kind of sublime imagery he utilises in The Minstrel, and he goes on to argue that such scenery has a profound negative impact upon the imagination, which is indeed Beattie's position concerning solitude and melancholy in his later years. The passage recalls the eloquence of similar nature passages in the early poetry. The highlands of Scotland are a form sublime, but in general a melancholy neighbourhood:

Long tracts of mountainous desert, covered with dark heath, and often obscured by misty weather; narrow vallies, thinly inhabited, and bounded by precipices resounding with the fall of torrents;...the mournful dashing waves along the friths...in a lonely region, full of echoes, and rocks, and caverns; the grotesque and ghastly appearance of such a landscape by the light of the moon.⁵¹⁴

This landscape has considerable consequence for the individual's cast of mind, and according to Beattie: "Objects like these diffuse a gloom over the fancy, [which] cannot fail to tincture the thoughts of a native in the hour of silence and solitude."⁵¹⁵ Beattie's description of the sublime scenery of the highlands is reminiscent of mid-eighteenth-century accounts of the Alps. Thomas Gray recalls similar emotions inspired by the Grande Chartreuse:

Not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry. There are certain scenes that would awe an atheist into belief, without the help of other argument. One need not have a very fashionable imagination to see spirits there at noon-day: You have Death perpetually before your eyes, only so far removed, as to compose the mind without frightening it.⁵¹⁶

It is not surprising that Beattie's depiction of this kind of scenery is derived from the

⁵¹⁴ Beattie, Essays 169.

⁵¹⁵ Beattie, Essays 169.

⁵¹⁶ Gray to West, 16 November 1739. Gray, Correspondence 1:128

highlands rather than the Alps. Since Beattie's travels never took him to the continent but frequently to the highlands, it is logical that he would express the melancholy and sublimity of the landscape in terms of his own experience. To support this argument of the inspiring and awesome highland scenery, Beattie invokes the melancholy poetry of Ossian⁵¹⁷ as an example of the kind of savage, dreary poetry inspired by the highland landscape, and explores the characteristics of the people who inhabited this kind of region. This argument leads into an interesting examination into the feelings of sympathy which it is poetry's aim to evoke.

In this section, Beattie addresses the sympathy felt for the dead, and when examined within the context of Beattie's numerous memorial poems, it is a poignant passage. Beattie focuses on the physical body rather than the immortal soul, because it is with that part of the person that the mourner sympathises. The immortal soul is in heaven and so does not suffer the same fate as the physical body, which is what is left of the beloved on earth after their death. The passage depicts in similar terms the alienation from the dead felt by mourners, and the inevitable ignominy of death.

Beattie explains: "With the dead we sympathise, and even with those circumstances of their condition whereof we know that they are utterly insensible; such as, their being shut up in a cold solitary grave, excluded from the light of the sun, and from all pleasures of life, and liable in a few years to be forgotten forever."⁵¹⁸ The section on sympathy continues with an investigation into the pathos evoked by ancient and modern writers alike, through the use of poetic language. Beattie focuses on a number of poetic devices and their use in poetry to evoke pathos and heighten emotions, especially within the context of mourning. It begins by arguing that poetic language must imitate natural language, since poetry is measured by its imitation of nature. Beattie defines natural language as "that use of speech, or of artificial

⁵¹⁷ Beattie denounced Ossian in 13 June 1782 to John Carr but only engaged in the controversy over Macpherson's works once before that. See pp. 99-100.

⁵¹⁸ Beattie, *Essays* 182.

language, which is suitable to the speaker and to the occasion.”⁵¹⁹ Though he argues for the use of natural language, he further argues for the necessity of figurative language in poetry, and delves into the specific characteristics of this kind of language, examining such features as tropes, personification, and apostrophe. In poetry the use of “Tropes and Figures promote[s] brevity; and brevity, united with perspicuity, is always agreeable”⁵²⁰ and heightens the pleasure of readers and thereby increases the poem’s power. He argues that while tropes and figures “agitate the soul, and rouse the fancy...so those that depress the mind adopt for the most part a plain diction without any ornament.”⁵²¹ Poets utilise figurative language to elevate emotions, and the final section of the essay deals with the sound of poetic language, and its quintessential relationship to the strength of pathos that poetry is capable of evoking in a reader.

The section focuses on sweetness, measure, and imitation, as the characteristics of poetic language which contribute to the overall sound and harmony of poetry. Beattie contends that to “In order to give sweetness to language, either in verse or prose, all words of harsh sound, difficult pronunciation, or unwieldy magnitude, are to be avoided as much as possible.”⁵²² With regard to measure, he argues:

That the rhythm and measures of verse are naturally agreeable; and therefore, ...poetry may be made more pleasing than it would be without them, is evident from this, that children and illiterate people, whose admiration we cannot suppose to be the effect of habit or prejudice, are exceedingly delighted with them.⁵²³

To illustrate this point Beattie rehearses excerpts from ancient and modern writers, and

⁵¹⁹ Beattie, Essays 194.

⁵²⁰ Beattie, Essays 241.

⁵²¹ Beattie, Essays 247.

⁵²² Beattie, Essays 272.

⁵²³ Beattie, Essays 275-76.

concludes that “the poet takes into consideration the tone of voice suitable to the thoughts that occupy his mind, and thereto adapts the sound of his language.”⁵²⁴ The arguments of the essay “On Poetry and Music” are not unique to Beattie, but his concise language and pragmatic examples set it apart from contemporary works on the topic. The essay is also a clear presentation of Beattie’s later ideas concerning essential aspects of poetry, and offers an interesting context for the poems included (and those excluded) from his final volumes of poetry. In keeping with Beattie’s other prose works, the essay is a clear and concise philosophical investigation into important aesthetic topics, and presents many contemporary ideas concerning poetry and music in eloquent terms.

“An Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition” does not introduce a full philosophical analysis, but articulates what Beattie considers to be the origins of laughter in the mind, and the definition and role of ridicule. Beattie begins by criticising the theories of laughter presented by Hobbes, Hutcheson, and Akenside, a process which allows him to develop his own ideas on the subject within the proper context. Beattie’s purpose is to determine the causes of laughter and to identify the characteristics which distinguish it from ridicule. He also explores the role of ridicule in society and gives guidelines for its general usage. Beattie makes his purpose clear, and differentiates between the two distinct types of laughter; the purpose of the essay is: “to analyse and explain that quality in things or ideas, which makes them provoke pure Laughter, and entitles them to the name of Ludicrous or Laughable.”⁵²⁵ Beattie defines the term “pure laughter” in his distinction between ludicrous composition and ridicule: “the former excite pure laughter, the latter excite laughter mixed with disapprobation or contempt.”⁵²⁶ This distinction leads directly to the theory of laughter advanced by Thomas Hobbes in Leviathan, which Joseph Addison articulates in the forty-

⁵²⁴ Beattie, Essays 283.

⁵²⁵ Beattie, Essays 302.

⁵²⁶ Beattie, Essays 302.

seventh issue of The Spectator⁵²⁷ in order to clarify his own perception of laughter.

According to Hobbes, laughter “is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves.”⁵²⁸ Beattie takes issue with Hobbes’s assertion because it is impossible to prove it accurate: “I cannot see how they should prove, that laughter is owing to pride, or to a sense of our superiority over the ludicrous object.”⁵²⁹ Richard Terry similarly comments that “the Hobbesian theory seems to attest to the irredeemably competitive nature of human relations.”⁵³⁰ In the Spectator Addison comments on the cynical nature of Hobbes’s system. Terry astutely observes that according to Addison, “laughter is all too often turned to the purpose of exposing ‘every single Defect in another’ and in ‘attacking’ every thing that is Solemn and Serious, Decent and Praise-worthy in Human Life.”⁵³¹ Beattie considers such a relationship to be fundamentally at odds with human nature, and so he illustrates the flaws in Hobbes’s hypothesis by turning his attention to the supposedly inferior person, the butt of the company, who, he argues, “is generally known to be one of the wittiest and best-humoured persons of it; so that the mirth he may diffuse around him cannot be supposed to arise from his apparent inferiority.”⁵³² Beattie then argues that laughter does not result from some turpitude or deficiency in an author’s mental process, because laughter is evoked by combinations that are fortuitous, when there is no thought or premeditation involved on the part of the author.⁵³³

⁵²⁷ Beattie comments that it is because of Addison’s approbation of Hobbes’s arguments that he includes them in his survey of systems concerning laughter. See Beattie, Essays 307.

⁵²⁸ Thomas Hobbes, The English Works of Thomas Hobbes, ed. Sir William Molesworth 11 vols. (London: Bohn, 1939) 3:46.

⁵²⁹ Beattie, Essays 309.

⁵³⁰ Terry, Mock-Heroic 172.

⁵³¹ Terry, 175.

⁵³² Beattie, Essays 310.

⁵³³ Paraphrased from Beattie, Essays 313.

The essay then shifts focus to the theory of laughter explicated by Francis Hutcheson in “Reflections on Laughter.” Hutcheson does not approve of Hobbes’s theory, which he categorizes as an attempt “to deduce all human Actions from Self-Love: by some bad Fortune he has over-look’d every thing which is generous or kind in Mankind.”⁵³⁴ Hutcheson takes Hobbes’s theory to its logical conclusion,⁵³⁵ and explains in greater detail the problem highlighted by Beattie; then, he proposes a theory of laughter based on oppositions which are perceived in objects and interpreted in the mind.

Hutcheson argues that “Laughter often arises without any imagined Superiority of ourselves, [and] may appear from one great Fund of Pleasantry, the Parody, and Burlesque Allusion; which move Laughter in those who may have the highest Veneration for the Writing alluded to, and also admire the Wit of the Person who makes the Allusion.”⁵³⁶ Here Hutcheson makes an important distinction between laughter as an aesthetic response based on perception and the value placed upon the author and the author’s subject. The genres which Hutcheson utilises operate on an inherent distinction between dignity or virtue, and their opposites to evoke the aesthetic response of laughter.

Beattie argues that there are situations which evoke laughter even though there is no opposition between dignity and meanness in either object or character—such as the performance of an actor one time mimicking a grave person and then mimicking the quirks of his own class. This is true in Beattie’s system because he “defines humour as arising from a mixture of uniformity and difference in a single assemblage.”⁵³⁷ To illustrate this point he

⁵³⁴ Francis Hutcheson, *Opera Minora*, Collected Works of Francis Hutcheson, ed. Bernard Fabian 7 vols. (Hidesheim: Georg Olms, 1971) 7:102.

⁵³⁵ “If Mr. Hobbes’s Notion be just, then first, There can be no Laughter on any occasion where we make no Comparison of our selves to others, or of our present State to a worse State, or where we do not observe some Superiority of our selves above some other Thing: And again, it must follow, that every sudden Appearance, of Superiority over another, must excite Laughter, when we attend to it. If both these Conclusions be false, the Notion from whence they are drawn must be so too.” Hutcheson, 7:103.

⁵³⁶ Hutcheson, 7:103-4.

⁵³⁷ Terry, *Mock-Heroic* 50.

goes through some characters of the modern novel, such as Dr. Harrison in Fielding's Amelia, who "is never mean, but always respectable; yet there is a dash of humour in him, which often betrays the reader into a smile."⁵³⁸ He argues that characters like this cleric illustrate the ability of a character to be laughable without any established oppositions. Beattie argues that it is "rather a mixture of sameness and diversity, sameness in the sound, and diversity in the signification"⁵³⁹ that evokes laughter. Beattie's acquiescence in many of the ideas of Mark Akenside's theory of ridicule, as presented in Book III of The Pleasures of Imagination sets his theory apart from the other sources under discussion, and introduces many ideas concerning laughter and ridicule which Beattie addresses in the essay.⁵⁴⁰

Akenside begins his investigation into ridicule by illustrating the kind of characters that are ridiculous, such as "ignorant pretenders to learning, boastful soldiers and lying travellers, [and] hypocritical churchmen,"⁵⁴¹ but Beattie argues that Akenside "does not distinguish between what is laughable in them, and what is contemptible; so that we have no reason to think, that he meant to specify the qualities peculiar to those things that provoke pure laughter."⁵⁴² Beattie's comment insinuates that no such distinction is made by Akenside or other theorists between those characteristics that are contemptible and those that evoke laughter without any sense of approbation.⁵⁴³ Beattie leaves this perceived lack of distinction and turns to Akenside's arguments concerning ridicule.

⁵³⁸ Beattie, Essays 316.

⁵³⁹ Beattie, Essays 316.

⁵⁴⁰ It has recently been argued that Akenside initially categorises laughter and ridicule as aesthetic responses in "Pleasures of Imagination." And so for Beattie as well as Akenside the two become "something which exists in the mind of the viewer (or reader), just as attraction or awe exist in the minds of those responding to the beautiful or sublime." Robin Dix, Literary Career 8.

⁵⁴¹ Beattie, Essays 316.

⁵⁴² Beattie, Essays 317.

⁵⁴³ Beattie seems to have overlooked a significant part of Akenside's argument. He argues that for a being or object to be ridiculous, the person or "the occurrence must excite no acute or vehement emotion of the heart, such as terror, pity, or indignation; for in that case, as was observed above, the mind is not at leisure to contemplate the ridiculous." Mark Akenside, The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside, ed. Robin Dix (London: Associated UP, 1996) 171.

Beattie's critique operates on the assumption that Akenside's arguments are familiar to his readers, and the arguments of Pleasures of Imagination are essential to a full understanding of Beattie's engagement with it. Beattie notes that the poem begins its investigation with a rehearsal of characters whose qualities make them both laughable and worthy of contempt. As Richard Terry observes: "Akenside's version of ridicule comes close to that advanced earlier by Hutcheson [who argues that ridicule is] constituted by the juxtaposition of contrary things in a single entity. But Akenside's is also a satiric version, in that ridicule is always shown censuring affectation and waywardness."⁵⁴⁴ Initially, Akenside argues that a major source of ridicule is vanity, because it allows the perceiver to celebrate their better qualities, which are accentuated by comparison to the subject of ridicule. He illustrates that this kind of comparison can lead to a false sense of virtue:

Behold the foremost band; of slender thought,
And easy faith; whom flatt'ring fancy sooth
With lying spectres, in themselves to view
Illustrious forms of excellence and good (III. 84-87).

The note to this passage further articulates the idea that ridicule "is vanity, or self-applause for some desirable quality or possession which evidently does not belong to those who assume it."⁵⁴⁵ Folly can be accentuated by a distorted, and distorting imagination, at which point the fool becomes laughable, stimulating the sense of ridicule in others:

By fancy's dazzling optics, these behold
The images of some peculiar things
With brighter hues resplendent, and portray'd
With features nobler far than e'er adorn'd

⁵⁴⁴ Richard Terry, "The Mirthful Sting: Akenside and the Eighteenth-Century Controversy over Ridicule," Mark Akenside: A Reassessment, ed. Robin Dix (London: Associated UP, 2000) 121-22.

⁵⁴⁵ Mark Akenside, The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside, ed. Robin Dix (London: Associated UP, 1996) 168.

Their genuine objects. Hence the fever'd heart
 Pants with delirious hope for tinsel charms;
 Hence oft obtrusive on the eye of scorn,
 Untimely zeal her witless pride betrays! (III. 153-60).

Although Akenside argues that at times ridicule is achieved through obscuring characteristics of objects and the perceptions of the viewer, ridicule can also function as a test for the validity of ideas, and therefore can be utilised by learned persons in the pursuit of truth.

Akenside deals with this particular use of ridicule in a note to an important passage of the poem. The lines to which the note refers are quoted by Beattie to support his ideas concerning the origins of laughter. Richard Terry argues that this usage “is a little disingenuous since he [Beattie] knows that the incongruities and dissonances that Akenside is concerned with here are always seen by the poet as having moral repercussions.”⁵⁴⁶ While this may be the case, Beattie’s use of the quotation⁵⁴⁷ does not confirm or deny the role of morality in a poem which produces laughter or the virtues which should be articulated by a poet. He utilises Akenside’s lines to support the supposition that “Laughter arises from the view of two or more inconsistent, unsuitable, or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in one complex object or assemblage, or as acquiring a sort of mutual relation from the peculiar manner in which the mind takes notice of them.”⁵⁴⁸ The matter under consideration is the process by which connections and distinctions are made that produce laughter, without regard to the moral consequences of such a response or its moral justification.

⁵⁴⁶ Terry, “Mirthful Sting”-129-30.

⁵⁴⁷ Beattie quotes *Pleasures of Imagination* lines 249-52: “: “Where'er the power of ridicule displays / Her quaint-eyed visage, some incongruous form, / Some stubborn dissonance of things combined, / Strikes on the quick observer.” Beattie, *Essays* 320.

⁵⁴⁸ Beattie, *Essays* 320.

Support for Terry's interpretation of Beattie's use of these lines comes from the note to this passage, which reinforces the use of ridicule as a barometer of moral truth. In the note Akenside argues that a sense of the ridiculous is natural to all, and therefore its usage cannot in all cases be detrimental to society or religion. He dismisses the question of whether the ridiculous can be morally true, because ridicule functions in cooperation with the reasoning faculty, articulating this notion by arguing that:

reason examines the terms of the proposition, and finding one idea which was supposed equal to another, to be in fact unequal, of consequence rejects the proposition as a falsehood; so in objects offered to the mind for its esteem or applause, the faculty of ridicule finding an incongruity in the claim, urges the mind to reject it with laughter and contempt.⁵⁴⁹

For Akenside, ridicule tests the validity of ideas, and the incongruity perceived in those ideas evokes laughter. Ridicule operates to enable a person to "detect the moral falsehood sooner than in the way of speculative inquiry, and impress the minds of men with a stronger sense of the vanity and error of its authors."⁵⁵⁰ In this system ridicule is able to detect the moral principles which are factors in how propositions presented to the mind are interpreted. In contrast to Akenside's theory, the system of laughter and ridicule which Beattie outlines, as Terry observes, is non-moralistic. However, he does argue that laughter does not arise from the perception of a person or object that is inherently contrary to a person's innate moral principles. He begins by setting out the scope of his argument, which differs from those which he has criticised: "A complete enumeration of ludicrous objects it would be vain to attempt [and] All that can be done in a case of this kind is to prove, by a variety of examples, that the theory now proposed is more comprehensive, and better founded, than any of the

⁵⁴⁹ Akenside, Pleasures of Imagination 171.

⁵⁵⁰ Akenside, Pleasures of Imagination 172.

foregoing.”⁵⁵¹ The section that follows describes a veritable laundry list of structures that produce laughter in the reader/viewer: contiguity, cause and effect, hyperbole, and the unexpected likeness between objects which at first glance appear dissimilar.

Beattie affirms: “things incongruous are often laughable, when united as parts of a system, or simply when placed together.”⁵⁵² To illustrate this point, he directs his attention first to bodily singularities which produce laughter, but recognises that even though there may be distortions they do not always evoke laughter in the viewer. Later in the essay he clarifies that for incongruity “to be ludicrous, [it] must be in some measure uncommon.”⁵⁵³ He further asserts that laughter can arise without an apparent opposition between things: “description may sometimes be laughable, when the ideas or phrases are related by juxtaposition only, and imply no perceptible contrast of dignity and meanness.”⁵⁵⁴ In this system, laughter can be provoked by a variety of different elements perceived in an object or action, and its ability to evoke laughter is dependent upon the effectiveness of the juxtaposition and perceived incongruity. The relationship of cause and effect provokes laughter when intense emotion is evoked that does not inspire sympathy; an example of this is the reaction of an audience to a scene in which the character and his actions are unsympathetic: “Violent anger occasioned by slight injury makes a man ridiculous; we despise his levity, and laugh at his absurdity.”⁵⁵⁵ Although intense emotions provoke laughter in this way, Beattie argues that it cannot arise from an immoral characteristic or action: “those absurdities in ourselves or others, which provoke the disapprobation of the moral faculty, cannot be ludicrous; because in a sound mind they give rise to emotions inconsistent with, and far more powerful than, that

⁵⁵¹ Beattie, Essays 324-25.

⁵⁵² Beattie, Essays 325.

⁵⁵³ Beattie, Essays 386.

⁵⁵⁴ Beattie, Essays 330.

⁵⁵⁵ Beattie, Essays, 334.

whereof laughter is the outward indication.”⁵⁵⁶ This argument is similar to Akenside’s critique of Aristotle’s definition of ridicule in *The Poetics*. Aristotle argues that “the ridiculous is some certain fault or turpitude without pain, and not destructive to its subject.”⁵⁵⁷ Akenside counters this notion by illustrating that there are certain circumstances which fit this definition but cannot be called ridiculous, and highlights that the characteristics of ridicule defy the simple definition provided by Aristotle.

For Akenside, “the sensation of ridicule is not a bare perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas; but a passion or emotion of the mind consequential to that perception.”⁵⁵⁸ Upon this distinction that ridicule is more than mere perception, he asserts that ridicule “must excite no acute or vehement emotion of the heart, such as terror, pity, or indignation; for in that case, as was observed above, the mind is not at leisure to contemplate the ridiculous.”⁵⁵⁹ Beattie takes up this argument of Akenside’s, and further asserts that laughter is not at odds with the moral nature of human beings, because it cannot be evoked by objects which are contrary the moral nature.⁵⁶⁰

Beattie then turns to hyperbole, and contends that it is also capable of evoking laughter, when it is in some way uncommon: “Familiar hyperboles excite neither laughter nor astonishment. All ludicrous and all sublime exaggeration, is characterised by an uncommonness of thought or language.”⁵⁶¹ The final verbal structure which provokes laughter is an unexpected similarity between objects which superficially appear to be dissimilar. He explains that “the greater the apparent dissimilitude, and new-discovered resemblance, the greater will be the surprise attending the discovery, the more striking the opposition of

⁵⁵⁶ Beattie, *Essays* 392.

⁵⁵⁷ Akenside, *Pleasures of Imagination*, 169.

⁵⁵⁸ Akenside, *Pleasures of Imagination* 169.

⁵⁵⁹ Akenside, *Pleasures of Imagination* 171.

⁵⁶⁰ This is Akenside’s argument also, but he reaches the conclusion differently.

⁵⁶¹ Beattie, *Essays* 339.

contrariety and relation, and the more lively the risible emotion.”⁵⁶² Beattie argues that the main quality in things which provokes laughter “IS AN UNCOOMON MIXTURE OF RELATION AND CONTRARIETY, EXHIBITED, OR SUPPOSED TO BE UNITED, IN THE SAME ASSEMBLAGE,”⁵⁶³ and that these verbal structures present the clearest examples of the ludicrous combinations available in modern language. The final section of the essay sets out to prove that the ludicrous writings of the moderns are superior to those of the ancients. By way of introduction to the topic, Beattie acknowledges that there are reasons why moderns are not competent judges of ancient humour, and explains that: “works of wit and humour would appear to be less permanent in their effects, and more liable to become obscure, than any other literary compositions.”⁵⁶⁴ He swiftly leaves this contested topic, and turns to the nature of modern ridicule, which, when “compared with the ancient, will be found to be, first, more copious; and, secondly, more refined.”⁵⁶⁵ Beattie rarely upholds moderns as superior to the ancients, and so their superiority with regard to ridicule is a rare moment in Beattie’s thought. In conclusion, Beattie points to revealed religion as an important refining characteristic of modern society. He argues that religion humanises society and refines conversation, and links politeness in conversation with virtue, and in his system the sense of virtue originates in religion.⁵⁶⁶

This is the only aspect of Beattie’s theory of ridicule that expresses an overtly pious view, which is meant to further highlight the superiority of Christian ridicule over its ancient pagan counterpart. While Beattie’s theory of laughter and ridicule operates on the assumption that what is laughable or ludicrous does not necessarily evoke moral disapprobation, his arguments concerning the refinement of modern ridicule are deeply rooted in the effect of

⁵⁶² Beattie, *Essays* 340.

⁵⁶³ Beattie, *Essays* 419-20.

⁵⁶⁴ Beattie, *Essays* 425.

⁵⁶⁵ Beattie, *Essays* 426.

⁵⁶⁶ Beattie, *Essays* 448-50.

religion upon society. Beattie's system of laughter and ridicule argues that objects which are contrary to morality evoke an emotion that is stronger than mere laughter.

"An Essay on Laughter" attempts to trace the origins of laughter and the way in which it is provoked in the mind. It does not articulate a full philosophical system on the subject, but rather an examination of the particular linguistic structures and qualities in objects that evoke laughter. Beattie's criticism of other philosophical systems concerning laughter and ridicule highlight problems in their interpretations, but more importantly, it introduces the aspects of the topic which he explores throughout the essay. Clearly Beattie's arguments concerning laughter and ridicule are not unique to him, but he presents them in the concise and engaging manner which is characteristic of Beattie's prose works.

Dissertations Moral and Critical (1783)

In the preface to this volume, Beattie introduces these essays as a means of instruction rather than a collection of "nice metaphysical theories, or other matters of doubtful disputation."⁵⁶⁷ The essays are intended to improve the minds of young readers and to introduce difficult topics in a clear and entertaining prose style. His goal is to "set before them such views of nature, and such plain and practical truths, as may at once improve the heart and the understanding, and amuse and elevate the fancy."⁵⁶⁸ The essays in this volume are a continuation of Beattie's basic philosophical purpose, to prepare young people for the business of life, and to reinforce rather than undermine the validity of what he believed to be the truths of the natural world.

⁵⁶⁷James Beattie, Dissertations Moral and Critical: On Memory and Imagination, On Dreaming, The Theory of Language, On Fable and Romance, On the Attachments of Kindred, Illustrations on Sublimity (London: Strahan and Cadell; Edinburgh: Creech, 1783)

⁵⁶⁸ Beattie, Dissertations, x.

“Of Memory and Imagination” begins by distinguishing faculties of the mind from the organs of sense. The faculties of memory, imagination, reason, and abstraction “are exerted, with no dependence on the body we can explain, in perceiving the human mind and its operations, and the ideas or thoughts that pass in succession before it.”⁵⁶⁹ He then outlines the characteristics that denote the use of memory: “When we remember, we have always a view to real existence, and to our past experience; it occurs to our minds, in regard to this thing which we now remember, that we formerly heard it, or perceived it, or thought of it.”⁵⁷⁰ In contrast: “When we imagine, we contemplate a certain thought, or idea, simply as it is in itself, or as we conceive it to be, without referring it to past experience, or to real existence.”⁵⁷¹ Beattie then turns to the particular characteristics of memory: the way it functions, the laws that govern its operation, and the methods by which memory can be improved. Beattie’s arguments concerning the function of memory are in keeping with his overall philosophical system of common sense. He begins the essay by rejecting the commonly held theory

that every thing, in a word, that we remember, makes upon the brain a certain impression, which, remaining for some time after, is taken notice of by the mind, and recognized, as the mark of that particular sensation or idea; and that this sensation or idea, thus obtruded upon us anew, gives rise to remembrance.⁵⁷²

Beattie reveals the problematic nature of this system by pointing out that impressions made upon the brain must have solidity, magnitude and figure, and these qualities are not present in

⁵⁶⁹ Beattie, Dissertations 4.

⁵⁷⁰ Beattie, Dissertations 6.

⁵⁷¹ Beattie, Dissertations 6. An interesting comparison can be made between this argument and Hume’s argument concerning the function of the imagination. See pp. 152-53.

⁵⁷² Beattie, Dissertations 10.

thoughts, feelings, or sounds, but are stored as impressions in the mind.⁵⁷³ Therefore, he reasons “that the theory in question ought not to find a place in philosophy, because [it is] incapable of proof from experience; it being impossible, with bodily eyes, to discover, in what way the human brain may be affected by thinking and perceiving.”⁵⁷⁴

This declaration is a comment representative of common sense philosophy, and enables Beattie to bypass Hume’s philosophy, which supports the validity of the argument concerning memory that Beattie has discounted. Beattie’s refusal to engage in a discussion of Hume’s alternative theory is doubtless based on the belief that his were harmful to the young and less educated in society: in other words, the less said about them, the better. The rest of the section on memory abandons the problematic topic of the cause of remembrance and focuses on the rules that govern the function of memory, and how it may be improved.

The only law articulated in the essay is the importance of attention to the development of memory. According to Beattie, a sensation or piece of information “is likely to be long remembered, which at first appearance affects the mind with a lively sensation, or with some pleasurable or painful feeling.”⁵⁷⁵ Thus, the intensity of the response which a stimulus evokes corresponds to the strength of the remembrance of it. Furthermore: “The force wherewith any thing strikes the mind, is generally in proportion to the degree of attention we bestow upon it.”⁵⁷⁶ Having established this tenet of memory, the essay then argues against the way in which children are forced to commit complicated sermons and religious doctrines to memory without any true understanding of their content.

⁵⁷³ Paraphrased from Beattie, Dissertations 11.

⁵⁷⁴ Beattie, Dissertations 11.

⁵⁷⁵ Beattie, Dissertations 14.

⁵⁷⁶ Beattie, Dissertations 15.

Beattie argues that to exercise the memory of children “their tasks [should] be proportioned to their ability, and their attention directed to such things as they may easily comprehend.”⁵⁷⁷ The essay then shifts focus to the methods of improving the functions of memory in writing and conversation, and the final section on memory deals with the memory of animals. Neither of these sections is relevant to my purpose, so I will turn to the second half of the essay, which deals with the imagination, its function and improvement.

This section defines the imagination in common philosophical terms: “Imagination seems to denote; first, the power of apprehending or conceiving ideas, simply as they are in themselves, without any view to their reality: and secondly, the power of combining into new forms, or assemblages, those thoughts, ideas, or notions, which we have derived from experience, or from information.”⁵⁷⁸ The imagination is also the faculty by which ideas are associated, on the basis, he says, of resemblance, contrariety, nearness of situation, or cause and effect.

For Beattie as well as his colleague Alexander Gerard, “Invention in turn derives solely from the faculty of imagination”⁵⁷⁹ because it is the part of the mind that reassembles thoughts and ideas, a process essential to the operation of genius. The essay’s treatment of genius is intended to supplement the work of Gerard⁵⁸⁰ on the topic. He then defines the term genius, illustrating its relationship to the imagination, and defining taste: “The talent of invention, applied to useful purposes, is called Genius. Imagination, united with some other mutual powers, and operating merely as a percipient faculty, in conveying suitable impressions of what is elegant, sublime, or beautiful in art and nature, is called Taste.”⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁷ Beattie, Dissertations 21.

⁵⁷⁸ Beattie, Dissertations 74.

⁵⁷⁹ James Engell, The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1981) 80.

⁵⁸⁰ See pp. 18-19 and 102-3 for eighteenth-century theories of original genius.

⁵⁸¹ William Duff argues that the imagination collects images upon which judgement will work. See p. 100-2.

Imagination and other powers work together to judge objects in nature, which they label taste. In Beattie's system the imagination is integral to the development of genius, because it is integral to the invention of new ideas and connections. He argues that creation is within the purview of the imagination, and therefore a lively and active imagination is essential to the development of genius: "Genius being the talent of useful invention, and invention the work of imagination, it may seem to follow, that whatever diversifies imagination, must give variety to genius."⁵⁸² Beattie's argument concerning poetic genius questions the argument of Edward Young,⁵⁸³ by proposing that poetic genius can develop through experience: "Those who relish harmony of language, and read the works of poets, especially of good poets, very early in life, acquire in time a poetical taste, which, if other circumstances be favourable, will produce something like a genius for poetry."⁵⁸⁴

Beattie then turns to the particular modes of genius, which are a rehearsal of the arguments made by Gerard. He advocates the regulation of the imagination, and highlights its dangerous consequences, which are reminiscent of his own youthful experiences: "The Imagination stands most in need of restraint, when it runs into one or other of the opposite extremes of Levity and Melancholy. The first is incident to youth; the second to manhood and old age. The latter is more fatal to happiness than the former; but both are attended with much evil."⁵⁸⁵ Clearly the effect of solitude upon the imagination is now considered dangerous in Beattie's mind, which contrasts greatly to his juvenile poetry, in which solitude elevated the imagination and produced striking figures of beauty. This passage shows Beattie's very altered perception of solitude and melancholy over the course of his lifetime.

⁵⁸² Beattie, Dissertations 155.

⁵⁸³ Young argues that poetic genius is not made, but grows organically in nature and cannot be taught. See p. 18.

⁵⁸⁴ Beattie, Dissertations 157.

⁵⁸⁵ Beattie, Dissertations 194.

This cautionary tale is strikingly akin to the development of Beattie's own poetic imagination, for in youth he did indeed welcome solitude and melancholy,⁵⁸⁶ and in his middle age he warns against the consequences of an indulgence in emotions which he himself had valued earlier in life. He now considers solitude and melancholy to be harmful, and illustrates their negative influence in practical life: "Indolence and solitude sound prettily in pastoral poems;⁵⁸⁷ but we were made for fellowship and labour: and if we give ourselves up to idleness, or abandon the society of our fellow-creatures, our lives will be unnatural, and therefore unhappy."⁵⁸⁸ Beattie cautions his readers against indulgence in the imagination in solitude and melancholy scenery, because it does nothing to qualify them for the day to day practicalities of life.⁵⁸⁹ To guard against indulgence in the melancholy which can harm the mind, Beattie advises that his readers should "pursue those studies only, which are amusing, practical, and useful; whereof there is a sufficiency to fill up every leisure hour of life."⁵⁹⁰ The essay then focuses on dreaming in an attempt to call into question many of the superstitions surrounding it. Though it is an interesting section of the essay, it bears no relevance to Beattie's poetic career.

The essay "On Fable and Romance" begins with a rehearsal of fables both ancient and modern, and divides them into allegorical and poetical subgroups. Within the allegorical category he makes further distinction with regard to modern fable: "The Allegorical part of modern prose fable may be subdivided into two species, the Historical and the Moral; and the Poetical part I shall subdivide into two sorts, the Serious and the Comick."⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁶ See pp. 16-19.

⁵⁸⁷ It should be remembered that Beattie translated the Eclogues of Virgil in his youth, when he believed solitude to be a positive influence upon the mind. See p. 18-19.

⁵⁸⁸ Beattie, Dissertations 200.

⁵⁸⁹ He deals with these themes in much of his early poetry, such as "The Triumph of Melancholy" and "The Hermit." See pp. 36-41 and 223-26.

⁵⁹⁰ Beattie, Dissertations 201.

⁵⁹¹ Beattie, Dissertations 511.

The last two categories are hence referred to under the general term Romance. The essay is essentially a criticism of the use of fable in both ancient and modern works that fall into these general categories. His comments on Pilgrim's Progress are of particular interest, since he uses the same narrative structure in his unpublished satire "The Castle of Scepticism."

His criticism of Bunyan's work reinforces the value which Beattie places upon education as a means of refining the creative faculty: "some of the allegories are well contrived, and prove the author to have possessed powers of invention, which, if they had been refined by learning, might have produced something very noble."⁵⁹² The subject of the essay then shifts to an investigation into "The rise and progress of the MODERN ROMANCE, or Poetical Prose Fable"⁵⁹³ which occupies a considerable portion of the essay. This section is "a lively account of the rise of chivalry and the feudal system;"⁵⁹⁴ which naturally led to the development of the medieval romance.

This leads in to a discussion of the characteristics of chivalry, which he argues was the origin of romance.⁵⁹⁵ Beattie's borrowings from Richard Hurd's Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762) are not great in number, but do present an important context for Beattie's arguments on the subject. Audley Smith argues that "many of Beattie's points pertaining to the characteristics of Chivalry were taken from Letters I and II of Hurd's discourse."⁵⁹⁶ While Hurd's critique's of the uses of gothic romance as a vehicle for expression and investigation into moral behaviour do not extend farther than Spenser's Faerie Queene and Milton's Paradise Lost, Beattie's focus is on the use of the romance genre in the modern novel.

⁵⁹² Beattie, Dissertations 514.

⁵⁹³ Beattie, Dissertations 518.

⁵⁹⁴ Roger Robinson, introduction, Dissertations Moral and Critical, by James Beattie (London: Thoemmes-Routledge, 1996) xxv.

⁵⁹⁵ "It was one of the consequences of chivalry. The first writers in this way exhibited a species of fable, different from all that had hitherto appeared. They undertook to describe the adventures of those heroes who professed knight-errantry." Beattie, Dissertations 559.

⁵⁹⁶ Audley L. Smith, "Richard Hurd's Letters on Chivalry and Romance" ELH 58 (1939): 76.

He argues that modern romance was initiated by Cervantes in Don Quixote which “was more read, and more relished, than any other romance had ever been.”⁵⁹⁷ He further proposes that Don Quixote illustrated to the reader the ridiculous nature of the genre of romance: “And thus, the extravagance of those books being placed, as it were, in the same groupe with the appearances of nature and the real business of life, the hideous disproportion of the former becomes so glaring by the contrast, that the most inattentive observer cannot fail to be struck with it.”⁵⁹⁸ For Beattie, Cervantes illustrates the absurdity of incorporating old romance into the day to day operations of life, an argument supported by the humour of the situations into which the hero is placed, and the reactions of the characters he encounters. It also highlights the dangers of indulgence in the genre of romance; in Beattie’s system (which he uses Don Quixote to illustrate) romances are capable of clouding the mind and making the reader incapable of functioning in society.⁵⁹⁹

The rest of the essay is concerned with what Beattie calls “modern romance” or the novel. His treatment of the novel is interesting because it marks the beginning of critical engagement with the novel as a serious literary genre. He deals with Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, Richardson’s Clarissa and History of Sir Charles Grandison, and Fielding’s Tom Jones and Amelia. His criticism of these authors is generally complimentary, though the essay ends by reinforcing his earlier comment outlining the dangers of indulgence in the genre of romance, which is reminiscent of Beattie’s general philosophical outlook. He insists that “Romances are a dangerous recreation. A few, no doubt, of the best may be friendly to good taste and good morals; but far the greater part are unskilfully written, and tend to

⁵⁹⁷ Beattie, Dissertations 563.

⁵⁹⁸ Beattie, Dissertations 562-63.

⁵⁹⁹ Beattie’s argument contrasts with Clara Reeve’s in “The Progress of Romance” (1785), in which she gives greater credit to the use of gothic romance in the modern novel, and has more respect for the genre of romance than Beattie.

corrupt the heart, and stimulate the passions.”⁶⁰⁰ Beattie warns against overindulgence in this genre because it has the power to distract the mind and elevate the passions, which can hinder a person’s ability to perform the day to day operations of life. This warning concerning the effect of romance upon the mind is once again hinges upon the potential of the imagination to distract the mind from daily life and the ability of fiction to undermine belief God and revealed religion in the minds of the young. Beattie’s fears concerning romance are characteristic of his ideas concerning the potential of the imagination to harmfully impact the young, and he considered it his duty as one charged with the education of young students to warn them against the dangers he perceived in romance. This didacticism is also prevalent in “Illustrations on Sublimity,” which deals with the characteristics of the sublime in nature and its representations in poetry, and how both experiences affect the mind.

In “Illustrations on Sublimity” Beattie engages with ancient rather than modern philosophers on the characteristics of the sublime and its effect on the mind. It is significant that nowhere in the essay does he discuss Edmund Burke’s A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1757).⁶⁰¹ It is possible that Beattie felt that Burke’s theories were too advanced to be referenced in an essay meant as an introduction to the sublime, or that he did not wish to introduce Burke because his theory of sensations is in direct opposition with Beattie’s common sense theory concerning sensations and perceptions. James Boulton highlights the few points in the essay which he believes point to Beattie’s indebtedness to Burke. Boulton insinuates that Beattie’s debt to Burke’s Enquiry is substantial, but Beattie insultingly never acknowledges this in the essay. He also suggests that this omission arises from a reluctance to “accept his [Burke’s] central, sensationist

⁶⁰⁰ Beattie, Dissertations 573-4.

⁶⁰¹ Roger Robinson points out in his introduction to the essay that James Boulton argues that Beattie borrows many of Burke’s ideas without giving him due credit. See Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, ed. James T. Boulton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987) xxix-xxx.

principle.”⁶⁰² The omission of Burke’s Enquiry is similar to that of Hume in the essay “On Memory and Imagination.” Beattie refuses to introduce philosophers whose systems contradict his own philosophical ideas, because it would then be imperative to refute their ideas, and in so doing, he would be obliged to offer to his young reader philosophies which he believed had great potential for harm, especially on the minds of youths. Since the essay is intended as an introduction to the topic of the sublime and an illustration of its function in literature.

Beattie’s gloss on the topic presents a number of commonplace notions concerning the sublime, and points solely to ancient rather than modern philosophers as references for his ideas and his definition of the sublime and his illustrations are drawn from painting as well as poetry by both ancient and modern artists.⁶⁰³ Beattie begins the essay with an exploration of the etymology of the word ‘sublime’ as first used by Longinus, and articulates his own definition of the term sublime: “it is rather the relative magnitude of things, compared with others of the same kind, that raises this emotion, their absolute quantity of matter.”⁶⁰⁴ He disagrees with the illustration of sublime pleasure articulated by Lucretius:

“It is pleasant,” says Lucretius, “to behold from the land the labours of the mariner in a tempestuous ocean; — but nothing is more delightful, than from the heights of science to look down on those who wander in the mazes of error: not (says he) because we are gratified with another’s distress; but because there is a pleasure in feeling evils from which we ourselves are “free.”⁶⁰⁵

According to Beattie this illustration of the sublime is inaccurate, because the sublime cannot

⁶⁰² Boulton introduction, lxxxvii.

⁶⁰³ Virgil, Raphael, Homer, Joshua Reynolds, and John Milton are mentioned.

⁶⁰⁴ Beattie, Dissertations 609.

⁶⁰⁵ Beattie, Dissertations 606-7. Beattie is quoting Lucretius, De Rerum Natura 2.4-8.

be evoked by a situation which is dangerous or harmful to another being: "to see others in danger, or unhappy in their ignorance, must always give pain to a considerate mind, however conscious it may be of its own security, and wisdom."⁶⁰⁶ For Beattie, the sublime cannot be evoked by circumstances in which it would be immoral to take pleasure, or those events which would instinctively evoke sympathy and compassion rather than comfort and confidence in a superior situation. Beattie's moral intentions for the sublime lead to his articulation of the sublime nature of religious emotions, and religious passions.

Beattie's understanding of the sublime is similar to that of John Dennis, who argues that "that Religion is that thing from which the Sublime is chiefly to be deriv'd..."⁶⁰⁷ because it excites the strongest passions in the soul and inspires the greatest thoughts. In the tradition of Dennis, Beattie's system of the sublime is inundated with moral purpose, as he argues that "Benevolence and piety are sublime affections; for the object of the one is the Deity himself, the greatest, and the best; and that of the other is the whole human race, or the whole system of percipient beings."⁶⁰⁸ However, the sublime is not limited to these emotions, because "the test of sublimity is not moral approbation, but that pleasurable astonishment wherewith certain things strike the beholder."⁶⁰⁹ This pleasurable astonishment can be mingled with intense negative feelings, but it cannot be evoked by a situation in which it would be immoral to take pleasure. That the sublime must adhere to moral principles is an important element of Beattie's overarching system of the sublime, which the essay develops. He then turns to the sublime horror which impresses itself upon the mind of the viewer, and the pleasure which it inspires: "There is a kind of horror, which may be infused into the mind both by natural appearances, and by verbal description; and which, though it make the blood seem to run

⁶⁰⁶ Beattie, *Dissertations* 607.

⁶⁰⁷ John Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry*, introduction by John Valdimir Price (London: Thoemmes-Routledge, 1994) 81.

⁶⁰⁸ Beattie, *Dissertations* 611.

⁶⁰⁹ Beattie, *Dissertations* 612.

cold, and produce a momentary fear, is not unpleasing, but may be even agreeable: and therefore, the objects that produce it are justly denominated sublime.”⁶¹⁰ This complex relationship between terror and pleasure is reminiscent of Dennis’s system, but Dennis also argues that the greatest terror is inspired by religion: “The greatest Enthusiastick Terroure then must needs be deriv’d from Religious Ideas, for since the more their Objects are Powerful, and likely to hurt, the greater Terroure their Idea’s produce.”⁶¹¹

Though Beattie’s system does not articulate the same sentiments concerning religious ideas, the notion of pleasurable terror is the crux of Beattie’s illustration of the sublime; and the essay then investigates the characteristics of poetry and painting which are capable of evoking this kind of sublime response in the reader/viewer. Beattie’s investigations reinforce the philosophical undercurrents of his essays, the superiority and perfection of nature and representations which reflect the beauties of nature. He explains that “The most perfect models of sublimity are seen in the works of nature.”⁶¹² The larger portion of the essay discusses the characteristics of the sublime in architecture, painting and poetry. He begins with architecture, and argues that for a structure to be sublime it must be “large and durable, and withal so simple and well-proportioned as that the eye can take in all its greatness at once.”⁶¹³ The simplicity which Beattie articulates as essential to the sublime in architecture is also integral to the sublime in poetry, which Beattie illustrates in common terms:

Poetry is sublime, when it elevates the mind. This indeed is a general character of greatness. But I speak here of sentiments so happily conceived and expressed, as to raise our affections above the low pursuits of sensuality and

⁶¹⁰ Beattie, *Dissertations* 615.

⁶¹¹ Dennis, 70.

⁶¹² Beattie, *Dissertations* 617.

⁶¹³ Beattie, *Dissertations* 618.

avarice, and animate us with the love of virtue and of honour.⁶¹⁴

According to Beattie, sublime poetry is capable of elevating the mind above sensual human desires and connects the reader/viewer with intangible positive emotions which are meant to improve the mind rather than distract it from moral virtues and daily life.

The final section of the essay argues that the sublime in poetry is an expression of the sublime experienced in nature, and therefore takes on a universal purpose: “true poetry is addressed to all mankind; and therefore its ideas are general; and its language ought to be so plain, as that every person acquainted with the poetical dialect may understand it.”⁶¹⁵ The “Illustrations on Sublimity” articulates a system of the sublime which is in symmetry with Beattie’s system of common sense philosophy, though appropriating particular aspects of contrary philosophical systems that reinforce what Beattie argues are the characteristics of the sublime and its effect upon the mind.

The publication of Beattie’s two volumes of prose essays as well as the two volume collection of his lectures, coincides with a number of personal tragedies, and presents an important context for their composition as well as Beattie’s intellectual decline upon the completion of these volumes. As previously noted, the health of his wife Mary Beattie had deteriorated and Beattie was forced to remove her from their home; her permanent absence depressed Beattie’s spirits and caused him constant anxiety.

Shortly after the publication of the first volume of Elements of Moral Science⁶¹⁶ in 1790, his eldest son James Hay died of consumption, and Montagu died of the same disease just six years later. The early deaths of his sons broke Beattie’s spirit, and the death of his youngest son signalled the decay of Beattie’s active intellectual powers. He began to suffer from mental confusion and was forced to retire from his position as professor.

⁶¹⁴ Beattie, Dissertations 620.

⁶¹⁵ Beattie, Dissertations 652.

⁶¹⁶ This is a collection in abstract form of the various lectures given to his students during his professorship.

The tragic events of his late years present an interesting backdrop for the publication of the essays, because they represent what Beattie knew would ultimately be his final collection of public works. Nature is a key theme throughout these essays, and indeed throughout Beattie's career.

Beattie's Scottish Language Works

Beattie intended his Scoticisms, Arranged in Alphabetical Order, Designed to Correct Improproprieties of Speech and Writing (small run printed for private circulation 1779, published for public consumption in 1787) to be a reference work, "to put young writers and speakers on their guard against some of those Scotch idioms, which, in this country, are liable to be mistaken for English."⁶¹⁷ Beattie states in the advertisement that this collection is meant to reinforce the purity and proper usage of English, in opposition to what he calls the debasement of "the purity of the language, by a mixture of foreign and provincial idioms, and cant phrases; a circumstance, which has in other countries generally preceded, and partly occasioned, the decline of learning."⁶¹⁸ The following two hundred words are meant to aid young men of Scotland in their use of English, and the collection is intended to enable them to write with confidence. Beattie's case highlights the validity of John Butt's assessment of the status of the English language at the time: "Though a man should speak Scots, it seemed good sense to learn how to write English, for English was now the language of Parliament as well as of the court, and was useful in a united kingdom, as Latin had been in medieval Europe."⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁷ James Beattie, Scoticisms, Arranged in Alphabetical Order, Designed to Correct Improproprieties of Speech and Writing (Edinburgh: Creech; London: Cadell, 1787) 2.

⁶¹⁸ Beattie, Scoticisms 3-4.

⁶¹⁹ John Butt, The Mid-Eighteenth Century, ed. Geoffrey Carnall (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979) 142.

Beattie articulates his concerns over the uses of English by Scottish gentlemen in a letter to William Forbes: “We dare not hazard idiomatical expressions, for fear they should be Scotch or not English; we write with a dictionary at our elbow, and are continually apprehensive of committing some blunder: this fear gives a constraint to our manner, in spite of all our endeavours to the contrary; and from this fear an Englishman is perfectly free.”⁶²⁰

Beattie’s intention for the collection of *Scoticisms* was clearly to educate Scottish youths of the proper use of words, which was a consequence of their seclusion from the idioms of their southern compatriots. This education was intended to improve their ability to converse in the wider world, as Ralph Walker comments in his introduction to Beattie’s *Day-Book*:

Educated Scotsman strove to acquire accuracy and purity of idiom in their English in much the same way that the educated medieval Scot aimed at accuracy and facility in Latin, because it gave him the entrée, on equal terms with others, to a wider culture than that of any one nation and sealed him of the fellowship of the lettered.⁶²¹

This collection can be perceived as an attempt to rid Scottish youths of their native idiom, however, as Walker points out, the desire to command English idiom in eighteenth century Scotland resulted from a desire to succeed rather than to assimilate. Beattie’s desire to contribute to the positive improvement of the youth of Scotland through this collection once again highlights his continued commitment to the education.

⁶²⁰ Beattie to Sir William Forbes, 12 June 1779. Beattie, *Correspondence* 3:101-4. Also found in W. Forbes, 2:47.

⁶²¹ Ralph S. Walker, *James Beattie’s Day-Book: 1773-1798* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP, 1948) 17.

“To the Printer of the Aberdeen Journal” and “To Mr. Alexander Ross” (1768) were published as forewords to a volume of poetry in Broad Scotch by Alexander Ross. Beattie’s poem was composed before the first book of The Minstrel, and is his only poem in the “Broad Scotch” dialect. The poem, “To Mr. Alexander Ross at Lochlee,” was written to help advance the sale of Ross’s own volume of poetry. Ross had known Beattie’s father in Laurencekirk, and “in 1766 Ross brought to him [Beattie] his MSS., from which Beattie selected for publication *Helenore* and a few songs.”⁶²² In 1768, Beattie sent his poem together with a letter praising Ross’s poems to the Aberdeen Journal with the pseudonym Oliver Oldstile.⁶²³ Beattie’s assistance to Ross marks an interesting reversal of roles. Beattie is now acting as patron, using his reputation in the neighbourhood to promote the volume. He makes his intentions known to John Gregory:

Having some acquaintance of the Author, and knowing him to be a goodhumoured social old man, I wrote a few scotch verses in recommendation of his work, which were inserted in the Aberdeen Journal, and have been of some use in promoting the sale.”⁶²⁴

He continues in the letter to clarify his position in favour of the English language as the best vehicle for poetry over Broad Scots:

Without regard to our political circumstances, the English language, from its own intrinsick value, is a thousand times more worthy of our cultivation. The Scotch tongue is really barren in itself, and, having been long confined to the lowest sort of people, is now become incapable of expressing any thing but

⁶²² Alexander Ross, The Scottish Works of Alexander Ross, M.A., ed. Margaret Wattie (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1938) xv.

⁶²³ The Letter, “To The Printer of the Aberdeen Journal” is dated 1 June 1768.

⁶²⁴ Beattie to John Gregory, 1 July 1768. Beattie, Correspondence 2:61-63.

low humour.⁶²⁵

The subject and light tone of the poem reinforce the frivolous character Beattie assigned to poems written in this dialect. Nevertheless, he did feel that a collection of Scots dialect poems in their original verse should be collected, and often pressed his friend Thomas Blacklock to be the editor of such a piece.⁶²⁶ Later in life, however, Beattie expressed his private displeasure over not receiving due credit for the volume: at the time of the second edition Beattie himself procured the fine paper for the edition to be printed upon as a gift for the Duchess of Gordon, and he relates his displeasure at the slight acknowledgement of his contributions by the author.⁶²⁷

Beattie's use of the Scots dialect in this poem is meant to excite curiosity in the readers of the Aberdeen Journal, which was intended to spark interest in what would be the target readership for Ross's volume. The poem is written in the "Standart Habbie" verse form, which was traditionally used in comedic or light-hearted poems north of the border. The poets Beattie celebrates were masters of this form, and he appreciates the abilities of the Scottish dialect to illustrate comedic and fanciful scenes. Allan Ramsay used this form specifically for humorous poetry, and his innovations in its usage were taken up by Robert Fergusson and perfected by Robert Burns.⁶²⁸ This versification is unique to Scots dialect, and the poem itself celebrates the versatility of this metre as well as Scottish culture generally.

⁶²⁵ Beattie to John Gregory, 1 July 1768. Beattie, Correspondence 2:61-63.

⁶²⁶ "I sincerely wish, you would undertake such a publication; it would amuse without fatiguing you; and it would do a credit to our country." Beattie to Thomas Blacklock, 24 May 1768. Beattie, Correspondence 2:58-60.

⁶²⁷ "It was I who planned the Edition, and procured the Duchess's consent that it should be dedicated to her. I also corrected the press, and the poems too, in many places. My only view in this was, to get a little money for the Author, whom, besides his own merit, I esteem, because he was a particular acquaintance of my Father, and has told me several things of him, which I never heard from any body else" Beattie's Day-Book vol. 2 (AUL MS. 430/15).

⁶²⁸ Burns quotes the poem in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop: "as Dr. Beattie says to Ross the poet, of his muse Scota, from which, by the by, I took the idea of Coila: ('Tis a poem of Beattie's in the Scottish dialect, which perhaps you have never seen)" and he goes on to quote the fifth stanza. Robert Burns, The Letters of Robert Burns, ed. J. Delancey and G. Ross Roy, 2nd ed. 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985) 1:256.

Unlike the nationalistic sentiments of Ramsay and Fergusson, Beattie favoured the incorporation of Scotland into Britain, culturally as well as politically. Despite his attitude toward “Broad Scotch,” the poem champions the value of Scotland’s rich literary heritage, which other eighteenth-century Scottish authors will build upon. The revival of vernacular poetry in Scotland “was manifest partly in the rediscovery of the vernacular for the purposes of poetry, and partly in the mastery over a closely related, yet still alien language.”⁶²⁹

The poem’s purpose is to situate Ross amidst the great Scots poets, such as Allan Ramsay: “Since Allan’s death, naebody car’d / For anes to speer how Scota far’d” (32-33). The speaker then defends the versatility and ancientness of the Scottish dialect: “Our countra’ leed is far frae barren, / It’s even right pithy and aulfarren” (43-44).⁶³⁰ These strengths of the ancient Scots dialects were discounted by contemporaries and Beattie himself; his attitude concerning the value and limitations of Scots dialect poems present another reason Beattie did not think highly of his poem, and neglected to include it in any future poetic volumes.

The Act of Union in 1707 sparked linguistic and cultural assimilationism within Scotland among intellectuals, and as a result the traditional languages and education were in steady decline: “Our fine newfangled sparks, I grant ye, / Gie poor auld Scotland mony a taunty” (61-62). The speaker then argues that to discount such a rich ancient language is to show ignorance rather than education: “Sae comes of Ignorance, I trow, / It’s this that crooks their ill-fa’rd mou’ / Wi’ jokes sae course, they gar fouk spue” (67-69).

The poem then shifts to a celebration of great Scots dialect poets of the past, whose example Ross (and Beattie himself in this poem) emulate: “’Twould tak a live-lang summer-day / To name the haff” (83-84). And so the speaker turns back to Ross and his particular volume by naming the landscape and dialect of Ross’s volume, with a hope that they will

⁶²⁹ Butt, 142.

⁶³⁰ Leed = Language, Aulfarren = Old-fashioned.

survive into posterity: “But ilka Mearns and Angus bairn / Thy tales and sangs by heart shall learn” (91-92). The poem is not a particularly brilliant use of Scots dialect, and Beattie himself was well aware of his poetic limitations using this vocabulary and verse form. Yet despite its deficiencies, it is an interesting moment in Beattie’s career. He is serving as Ross’s patron and by anonymous endorsement Beattie seeks to interest readers in Ross’s work. Beattie’s entry in his day-book in 1773 illustrates his personal financial investment in the poetic endeavour of his old family friend. It is likely this relationship began with the first edition in 1766, which would explain Beattie’s thinly veiled public endorsement of Ross’s poems.

Though Beattie’s later prose works present many commonplace eighteenth-century arguments concerning poetry, laughter, the imagination, romance writings, the sublime, and Scots dialect, they represent a significant stage in his public life. The essays selected for this study shed new light on many aspects of Beattie’s poetry, as well as other subjects which occupied him in the Essay on Truth. Because Beattie published the essays in an effort to make a positive impact upon young students, they are written in an accessible style and refrain from introducing what he considered to be dangerous ideas.

Chapter 7: Into the Future—Beattie's Influence on Scott, Coleridge, and Wordsworth

The influence of The Minstrel on the poetry of Sir Walter Scott illustrates the impact of the poem upon the next generation of Scottish poets in particular. Though Scott refers to Beattie only occasionally in his letters, he seems to have engaged with The Minstrel on a more than superficial level. In 1811 Scott speculates on the reasoning behind Beattie's decision not to compose a third book of The Minstrel.⁶³¹

But I conceive one reason of his deserting the task he had so beautifully commenced, was the persuasion that he had given his hero an education and tone of feeling inconsistent with the plan he had laid down for his subsequent exploits.⁶³²

This letter illustrates that he knew Beattie's text well enough to garner from it particular ideas concerning the character of Edwin, and the consequences of his education by the Hermit. His conjecture into Beattie's motivation and intentions for the poem provides insight into his own poetic expression. While many of Scott's poems have been linked to The Minstrel,⁶³³ I will focus mainly on The Lay of the Last Minstrel (1803-4), because it offers the most comprehensive example of Scott's engagement with Beattie's poem.

Scott's interest in the character of ancient minstrels is evident from his earlier collection of ballads, Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (1802-3). The collection was intended to fill a particular void in scholarship. He intended the volume to highlight Scotland's own rich tradition of minstrelsy, and to "combine popularity (at a modest 5 shillings) with the

⁶³¹ Scott's reasoned conjecture is remarkably akin to Beattie's own disappointment with his chosen fable.

⁶³² Sir Walter Scott, Letters of Sir Walter Scott 1811-1814, ed. H. J. C. Grierson (London: Constable, 1932) 26.

⁶³³ Everard King links The Minstrel with the autobiographical elements of Marmion and the natural scenery in the Lady of the Lake. See Everard King, James Beattie's The Minstrel and the Origins of Romantic Autobiography (New York: Mellen, 1992) 155-59.

more strenuous standards applied by scholars like Percy's critical antagonist, Joseph Ritson."⁶³⁴ This academic interest in minstrelsy and traditional ballads, and his preoccupation with a national literary heritage culminate in The Lay, which explores the decline in the honourable status of minstrelsy, and the resulting declines in the status of traditional story telling and folklore.

In Essays on Chivalry, Romance, and the Drama, Scott criticizes the historical accounts of minstrels given by Thomas Percy and his rival antiquarian Joseph Ritson, and explains his interest in the character of minstrels:

In fact, neither of these excellent antiquaries has cast a general or philosophic glance on the necessary condition of a set of men, who were by profession the instruments of the pleasure of others during a period of society such as was presented in the middle ages.⁶³⁵

The Lay explores the situation and character of a minstrel – matters which had, according to Scott, been overlooked by his fellow scholars. Scott's ideas expressed in this essay concerning the character of the historical figure of the minstrel are important to an overall understanding of his development of this character in The Lay. Scott further speculates that the decline of the Metrical Romances was "probably on account of the depreciated character of the minstrels by whom they were recited."⁶³⁶

Scott situates The Lay in this declining era of minstrelsy, and puts the narrative into the mouth of such a minstrel and uses a medieval verse form, "which forms the structure of so much minstrel poetry."⁶³⁷ Scott chose to present his narrative in an archaic verse form to connect his narrator with the tradition of minstrelsy, and in so doing adds credibility to the

⁶³⁴ John Sutherland, The Life of Sir Walter Scott: A Critical Biography (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 75.

⁶³⁵ Scott, Essays on Chivalry and Romance, and the Drama (London: Warne, nd) 81.

⁶³⁶ Scott, Essays 88.

⁶³⁷ Sir Walter Scott, The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart (Edinburgh: Cadell, 1841) 4.

characterisation of his minstrel as the last of his kind. The characterisation of Scott's minstrel as the sole survivor of a bygone age is an interesting point of departure for an exploration of the connection between Beattie's and Scott's characterisations of the minstrel.

Though The Lay is the minstrel's final narrative, Scott interrupts at the start and finish of each Canto to develop the character of the minstrel, and highlights traits that are reminiscent of those of the Hermit whom Edwin encounters in The Minstrel. Like Beattie's Hermit, who takes comfort in burdening Edwin's mind with subjects such as history, philosophy, and science,⁶³⁸ Scott introduces his minstrel as "a pathetic old man, vulnerable in his isolation, unfitted to the new regime, and deriving life only from the memories of a past as mortal as himself."⁶³⁹ Until his encounter with Edwin, Beattie's Hermit suffers the fate of Scott's minstrel at the beginning of The Lay: poverty and isolation from society and its comforts. King takes this similarity further, arguing that "Scott's minstrel is in effect a picture of Edwin as he might have grown old."⁶⁴⁰ Though their characterisations are similar, Beattie does not delve into the personal history of the Hermit, nor does he make minstrelsy the focus of his narrative.

Minstrelsy is vitally important to both The Minstrel and The Lay, but in different ways. For Beattie, minstrelsy provides the apparatus for his investigation into the natural versus formal education, and the consequences of education upon poetic genius; Edwin's crisis cannot be resolved because the narrative apparatus does not lend itself to further investigation into his swain's future. Scott explores the decline of minstrelsy using the experiences of the last minstrel in his last courtly performance. Scott argues that the history

⁶³⁸ The Hermit implores Edwin to continue his education with him: "Come often then; for, haply, in my bower, / Amusement, knowledge, wisdom thou may'st gain: / If I one soul improve, I have not lived in vain" (II. 286-88).

⁶³⁹ Fiona J. Stafford, The Last of the Race: The Growth of a Myth from Milton to Darwin (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994) 163.

⁶⁴⁰ King, Romantic Autobiography 156.

of minstrelsy is an important part of Scotland's literary development, and explores the implications of its decline on the poet as well as the audience. Scott's fictional minstrel finds himself in the court of Anne, the heiress of Buccleuch, whose connection to Scott's own family⁶⁴¹ adds a personal connection to Scott's narrative. The lay the minstrel sings to the court of Scott's ancestor pertains directly to their line, and is filled with references to their nobility and virtue. Though the feudal narrative is interesting in terms of its depiction of the medieval environment of the Scottish border, it is the framing stanzas of each Canto that carry the main impact of the poem. Jeffrey notes that "the elegance and the beauty of this setting, if we may so call it, though entirely of modern workmanship, appears to us to be fully more worthy of admiration than the bolder relief of antiques which it encloses."⁶⁴² The descriptions of the courtly scene in which the ancient narrative is sung by the minstrel provide the greatest insight into the common theme of minstrelsy between The Minstrel and The Lay.

The Lay opens by depicting the aged minstrel on a journey similar to that planned by Beattie for Edwin,⁶⁴³ and introduces him as a wayward vagabond: "A wandering Harper, scorn'd and poor, / He begg'd his bread from door to door. / And tuned, to please a peasant's ear, / The harp a king had loved to hear" (23-26). The opening of The Minstrel laments a similar fate for poets, and illustrates the kind of dejection which Scott's minstrel suffers:

Check'd by the Scoff of Pride, by Envy's frown,

And poverty's unconquerable bar,

In life's low vale remote has pined alone,

Then dropped into the grave, unpitied and unknown! (I. 6-9).

⁶⁴¹ Scott was ancestrally related to the Buccleuch family.

⁶⁴² Scott, 9.

⁶⁴³ In Beattie's plan for the third book of The Minstrel Edwin's land was to be attacked and he would be forced to take up his harp and become a wandering minstrel. See pp. 93-94.

Beattie's minstrel is a creature of nature destined to be misunderstood and unappreciated by his rural community, just as Scott's last minstrel is fated to wander in poverty. While The Minstrel focuses primarily upon education, poetic genius, and the effect of nature, Beattie does specifically situate the narrative in Scotland. He also situates Edwin and his kinsmen in particularly Scottish surroundings⁶⁴⁴ but it is their natural surroundings rather than specific locations which drive the scenes in the poem. For Scott "placename, family and landscape dominate the narrative with a localising power"⁶⁴⁵ and root the characters to their surroundings. Scott's minstrel is also introduced into specifically Scottish surroundings: "He pass'd Newark's stately tower / Looks out from Yarrow's birchen bower: / The Minstrel gazed with wistful eye" (Intro.27-29). Scott's minstrel finds himself as Scott did, upon the banks of the Yarrow in his old age, looking upon a symbol of nobility which personifies the lost ancient nobility of courtly minstrels.

The end of Canto I characterises the aged minstrel and his insecurity concerning his powers of oratory: "Dejectedly, and low, he bow'd / And, gazing on the timid crowd, / He seem'd to seek, in every eye, / If they approved his minstrelsy" (I.xxxii.3-5). The end of Canto III laments the death of his only child and his enforced solitude, while the final stanza of Canto IV highlights the function of minstrels as chroniclers of history. This characterisation of the last minstrel is reminiscent of Ossian's lament for the death of his youngest son in book V of Fingal,⁶⁴⁶ highlighting Scott's desire to place his bard within this tradition of great Scottish oratory. Canto V comments on the prospects of greater affluence

⁶⁴⁴ Edwin and his shepherd father are described as being of the "north countrie." See p. 112.

⁶⁴⁵ James Reed, Sir Walter Scott: Landscape and Locality (London: Athlone, 1980) 28.

⁶⁴⁶ "The tear is on the cheek of the king; for terrible was his son in war. His son! that was like a beam of fire by night on the hill; when the forests sink down in its course, and the traveler trembles at the sound." Book V, Fingal. James Macpherson, The Poems of Ossian and Related Works, ed. Howard Gaskell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996) 93.

for minstrels further south, but it is the end of Canto VI that most pointedly brings to the fore the fate of this aged bard.

His lack of confidence in the opening Canto is a startling contrast to what we see at the end of Canto VI when his lay has earned him a home and an established place in a court. No longer doomed to wander “close beneath proud Newark’s tower, / Arose the Minstrel’s lowly bower” (VI.xxxii.5-6) where strangers “Oft heard the tale of other days” (VI.xxxii.11). The minstrel’s performance of the lay and its warm reception by the court earn him a permanent dwelling within a community. He has managed to succeed in reclaiming the noble carriage and persona characteristic of the rank and position Scott assigns to minstrels. Beattie characterises minstrels as important to their community but does not assign them high social rank. For Beattie, the minstrel is important as a poet, and functions as a link to the natural world around him rather than as a chronicler of human deeds.

Though their characterisations differ in many respects, both illustrate their power as conveyers of nature’s inspiration. In The Minstrel, Beattie recalls the power of poetry to raise the emotions of an audience, and implores his young minstrel to carry on this tradition:

O let your spirit still my bosom sooth,
 Inspire my dreams, and my wild wanderings guide!
 Your voice each rugged path of life can smooth;
 For well I know, where-ever ye reside,
 There harmony, and peace, and innocence, abide (I.374-78).

Similarly, Scott depicts the power of the minstrel to raise the emotions of an audience, but also explores the affect of the audience upon the bard:

The Harper smil’d, well-pleas’d;
 For ne’er

Was flattery lost on poets' ear:
 A simple race! they waste their toil
 For the vain tribute of a smile;
 E'en when in age their flame expires,
 Her dulcet breath can fan its fires (IV.xxxvi.19-24).

Scott's focus is on the effect of the audience on the minstrel in an attempt to illustrate the importance of human encouragement upon the bard, to further reinforce the communal nature of poetry.

The sublime nature of the Scottish landscape is the driving inspiration of the imaginative mind of the minstrels depicted in both poems. In The Minstrel however, the landscape is in a sense universal, while for Scott the specificity of the Scottish landscape and place names root the action of the romance and the minstrel's presentation in an historical locale. Beattie introduces Edwin into an environment of solitude in the natural world, which is particularly Scottish only in the sense that it is derived from his own youthful experiences. The depictions of Edwin in this scenery reveal his close relationship with nature: "To deep untrodden groves his footsteps led, / To there would he wander wild, Till Phoebus' beam / Shot from the western cliff, released the weary team" (I.151-53). For Scott, the sublimity of the particularly Scottish landscape intensifies the scenes in the romance sung by the minstrel, and elevates the emotions of his courtly audience by appealing to their own sense of nationhood, and the parts which they and their ancestors have played in developing it. A notable example in the romance of this is the arrival of the knight Deloraine to the Abbey: "Old Melros' rose, and fair Tweed ran: / Like some tall rock with lichens grey, / Seem'd dimly huge, the dark Abbaye" (I.xxxi.4-6).

For Scott, landscape becomes a narrative tool, while Beattie deals with the impact of such a close relationship with the natural world on a growing, poetically inclined, intellect. Throughout The Minstrel, nature's ability to delight and inspire Edwin's imagination is apparent, but for Scott's minstrel the importance of nature as an inspiring force upon the imagination is not explicit until the final stanza of the final canto. The rendezvous of a maid with her knight in the minstrel's narrative is introduced by soft natural imagery. At dawn "The wild birds told their warbling tale, / And waken'd every flower that blows; / And peeped forth the violet pale" (II.xxv.5-7). The personification of the flowers foreshadows the rising of the maid "lovelier than the rose so red, / Yet paler than the violet pale, / She early left her bed" (II.xxv.9-11). The beauty of the passage is created by the diction and imagery of nature while advancing action. The narrative is advanced and an amorous tone set for a rendezvous through nature imagery.

The evidence suggests there is a strong possibility that in The Lay of the Last Minstrel Scott is consciously building upon the prototype for the use of minstrelsy as a means of narrative structure presented in The Minstrel. The characterisations of the minstrel in the poems, as well as the use of landscape and its impact upon the creative imagination seem closely related. Scott diverges from his predecessor in terms of his narrative and the strong connection he builds between the audience and his minstrel; his intention appears to be to explore the consequences of the decline of minstrelsy upon the development of Scottish poetry, rather than to explore a poet's imaginative development. Scott chooses to adopt only Beattie's characterisation of his minstrel and similar attitudes towards nature. In contrast, Samuel Taylor Coleridge presents a seemingly different philosophical approach to many of the topics Beattie addresses.

The philosophical thinking of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, as it comes through in the Biographia Literaria (1817) is not normally considered to have a close relationship with Beattie's works, because there is a fundamental difference in their two approaches. For Beattie, the rational and the emotional (or imaginative) faculties were in opposition, a fact that led him to eventually abandon poetry in favour of the philosophical pursuits, which, as we have seen, he felt morally obliged to take up. For Coleridge, on the other hand, the intellectual and emotional, or the philosophical and the poetic, are not at odds in great writing. They may begin by appearing as opposites, linked to such polar oppositions as the objective and subjective, but under the stimulus of imagination, these very different elements are transformed into the alloy of the unified and successful work of genius.

Previous studies of Coleridge's debt to Beattie have focused solely upon the influence of The Minstrel⁶⁴⁷ in terms of character and theme, while the connection between their philosophical and critical arguments has been relatively neglected. This is due in part to the misconception that if Coleridge thought at all of Beattie's Essay on Truth, it was in a negative way. Coleridge mentions Beattie's work in a number of works, and is not dismissive of all the philosophy, but rather the comments upon the work of David Hume.⁶⁴⁸ Coleridge believes that the Essay "was a book that honoured Beattie from the display of genius and eloquence which shot through and through as it were with a good heart and sincere piety"⁶⁴⁹ but goes on to admonish Beattie for what he believes to be Beattie's apparent misrepresentation of

⁶⁴⁷ King refers to the "Dejection Ode," "Monody on the Death of Chatterton," and "To Wordsworth." King, Romantic Autobiography 108-10.

⁶⁴⁸ Though there is little direct mention of Hume in Biographia, I agree with Cairns Craig that "...what Coleridge is trying to achieve is the suppression of the associationism of Hume, with all of the aesthetic, political, and religious consequences that it brought in its train." Cairns Craig, "Coleridge, Hume, and the Romantic Imagination." Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism, ed. Leith Davis, Ian Duncan, and Janet Sorensen (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 27.

⁶⁴⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Pilot, 1949) 202-3.

Hume's doctrine of cause and effect.⁶⁵⁰

These passages have been hitherto used as proof that Coleridge dismissed Beattie's work, which does not present an accurate account of his comments concerning the Essay or Beattie's character generally. The philosophical debt of the Biographia to German Idealists has long overshadowed the important influence of empirical philosophy on this work.⁶⁵¹ Modern critics have begun to investigate Coleridge's other major philosophical debt: the empiricism of the eighteenth century.⁶⁵² Additionally, M. H. Abrams examines the importance of eighteenth-century thinkers on Coleridge's thought, and suggests that many aspects of his philosophical system are rooted in the theories of his empiricist predecessors.⁶⁵³ Though critics have generally focused on influence of other empiricist thinkers on Coleridge, there is evidence to support his engagement with Beattie's philosophical and critical works throughout the Biographia. Coleridge's engagement with Beattie's thought is also evident in the theory of the imagination expounded in the Biographia. Though "in forming his concept of the imagination, Coleridge draws on nearly every other writer who discussed the subject,"⁶⁵⁴ my focus is on those aspects of his thought that are reminiscent of Beattie's arguments. Coleridge divides the faculty of the imagination into primary and secondary.

⁶⁵⁰ Coleridge, The Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 202-3. He also admonishes Hume for his "attacks on the principles of religion and morality" but does not agree with Hume's "contemporary opponents on either side of the Tweed" that his common sense was deficient. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Logic, ed. Barbara Rooke (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981) 192-3

⁶⁵¹ The debt of Coleridge to German thinkers has been assessed by a number of important critics, such as Thomas Weiskel, Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976). James Engell, The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism (London, Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1981).

⁶⁵² In his discussion of the distinction between fancy and imagination, Engell explains "By the last thirty years of the century a number of distinctions were available, each influenced by one or more previous writers, both German and English. Duff, Gerard, Beattie, and Reynolds were all read in Germany." Engell, 183.

⁶⁵³ M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (London: Oxford UP, 1953).

⁶⁵⁴ Engell, 328.

He famously postulates that the primary imagination is "the living Power and prime agent of all human Perception" while the secondary diverges from this power "only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify."⁶⁵⁵ In "Of Memory and Imagination," Beattie defines the imagination in similar terms, though he does not divide its function into distinct categories: "the word Imagination seems to denote; first, the power of apprehending or conceiving ideas, simply as they are in themselves, without any view to their reality: and secondly, the power of combining into new forms, or assemblages, those thoughts, ideas, or notions, which we have derived from experience, or from information."⁶⁵⁶ Beattie's definition of the imagination is closest to Coleridge's "fancy," since it focuses on combination and not re-creation. Further, he argues that a distinction between comprehension and combination within the imagination would be redundant, since their functions are so closely connected.⁶⁵⁷ Though Coleridge diverges from Beattie in the designation of primary and secondary powers in the imagination, both assign the power of assemblage (fancy) and creation (imagination) of new ideas, based on those of sense perception, to the imagination. Coleridge's distinction between fancy and imagination is interesting in comparison to Beattie's. Engell argues that though the contrast between these terms has often been attributed to Coleridge or to a German source, "a growing distinction between the terms took place in English usage throughout the eighteenth century."⁶⁵⁸ In contrast to the imagination, Coleridge labels fancy as "indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; blended with, and modified

⁶⁵⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria: Or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983) 1:304.

⁶⁵⁶ Beattie, Dissertations 74.

⁶⁵⁷ "These two faculties, therefore, of Simple Apprehension and Combination (as I shall take the liberty to call them) are so nearly allied, that there can be no harm in referring both to the Imagination or Fancy." Beattie, Dissertations 74.

⁶⁵⁸ Engell, 172. For more on the philosophical evolution of these terms see Engell, 172-83.

by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE.”⁶⁵⁹

Coleridge argues that the fancy is a part of the memory that is ruled by the will of an individual rather than the usual conventions of space and time.

Conversely, Beattie separates memory from the imagination, and defines fancy in terms of the imagination rather than the memory. For Beattie, imagination and fancy “are, indeed, names for the same faculty; but the former seems to be applied to the more solemn, and the latter to the more trivial, exertions of it. A witty author is a man of lively Fancy; but a sublime poet is said to possess a vast Imagination.”⁶⁶⁰ While their definitions converge, both recognise the need to differentiate between the imagination and the fancy, but for Coleridge this divergence is of greater importance, since he defines fancy as part of the memory, whereas for Beattie it is characteristic of the imagination in its more superficial operations. Coleridge’s exploration of the characteristics of a poet, as well as the attributes of a poetic genius, is similar in many ways to those arguments made by Beattie in his essays “Of Memory and Imagination” and “On Poetry and Music.”

Like Beattie, Coleridge argues that pleasure is the purpose of poetry: “a poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth.”⁶⁶¹ Though Beattie argues that pleasure is the ultimate end of poetry, he also argues that poetry cannot please if it does not also instil moral values.⁶⁶² Beattie and Coleridge are also connected in their investigations into the characteristics of poetic genius. Coleridge’s investigation into the characteristics and qualities of poetic genius also builds upon the foundation laid by Gerard, Young, and Duff. He begins by arguing that adequate poetic imitation of nature does not in itself denote poetic genius:

⁶⁵⁹ Coleridge, *Biographia* 1:305.

⁶⁶⁰ Beattie, *Dissertations* 72.

⁶⁶¹ Coleridge, *Biographia* 2:13.

⁶⁶² See pp. 233-34.

images however beautiful though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit.⁶⁶³

His description of the ability of genius to modify aspects of nature in poetry in order to raise the passions of the reader is similar to Beattie's argument that the products of the poetic genius must be modelled upon nature, but the mind adapts them to suit the poet's intentions and to build pathos. Coleridge's particular philosophical theory is in many ways an engagement with, and reaction to, many theories of his eighteenth century philosophical predecessors, but his debt specifically to Beattie's Essay on Truth has never been addressed, and I believe the philosophical similarities with the Biographia are more than an expression of common eighteenth-century motifs, or coincidental attributes. In the Biographia Coleridge deals with many of the philosophical and critical issues concerning the characteristics of the mind, including the perception of truth, the imagination, and poetic genius that engaged Beattie's attention.

The first compelling similarity comes in Coleridge's description of the characteristics of the mind, and the perception of truth. Coleridge recalls reaching the realisation that the truth of commonly held beliefs that cannot be proved by sensation, but are in fact verified by internal conviction: "I saw, that in the nature of things such proof is impossible; and that of all modes of being, that are not objects of the senses, the existence is assumed by a logical

⁶⁶³ Coleridge, Biographia 2:23.

necessity arising from the constitution of the mind itself, by the absence of all motive to doubt it, not from any absolute contradiction in the supposition of the contrary.”⁶⁶⁴ Beattie makes a similar claim in the Essay on Truth, arguing that “The certainty of some truths, for instance, is perceived intuitively; the certainty of others is perceived, not intuitively, but in consequence of a proof.”⁶⁶⁵ According to Coleridge, “if the mere intellect could make no certain discovery of a holy and intelligent first cause, it might yet supply a demonstration, that no legitimate argument could be drawn from the intellect against its truth.”⁶⁶⁶ Here, Coleridge argues that the validity of the belief in the existence of a divine creator cannot be verified by reason, nor can it be disproved by it. For Beattie the conviction of truth in things that cannot be proved by reason comes from the perception of an internal sense:⁶⁶⁷

We believe the truth of an investigated conclusion, because we can assign a reason for our belief; we believe an intuitive principle, without being able to assign any other reason for our belief than this, that the law of our nature determines us to believe it, even as the law of our nature determines us to see a colour when presented to our open eyes at noonday.”⁶⁶⁸

Beattie makes the belief in truth that is not proven through reason rely on the use of common sense, while Coleridge makes a similar claim for the existence of truth that cannot be proved by reason, but does not assign this function to common sense, referring instead to a general inner sense.

⁶⁶⁴ Coleridge, Biographia 1:200-1.

⁶⁶⁵ Beattie, Essay 31. Also see pp. 144-45 for the definition of truth and of common sense and its origins.

⁶⁶⁶ Coleridge, Biographia 1:201.

⁶⁶⁷ For more on the internal sense and the test of truth see pp. 153-54.

⁶⁶⁸ Beattie, Essay 41.

Coleridge's description of the inner sense and its function in the mind leads him to examine the purpose and operations of philosophy. He argues that philosophical investigation, "if it is to arrive at evidence, must proceed from the most original construction"⁶⁶⁹ - which is determined by the direction of the inner sense. It is the inner sense that intuitively perceives the existence of a line drawn in the sand, because it "is the sensuous image of the original or ideal line, and an efficient mean to excite every imagination to the intuition of it."⁶⁷⁰ This notion of an inner sense as an integral part of consciousness and interpretation of sensations is not unique to Coleridge;⁶⁷¹ it is his incorporation of idealism with empirical arguments concerning the interpretation of sensation and the inner consciousness that sets his system apart.⁶⁷² He goes on to argue that the inner sense can be expanded and enriched, or denied, according to the will of the person. This freedom leads him to resolve that "philosophy in its first principles must have a practical or moral, as well as a theoretical or speculative side."⁶⁷³ Similarly, Beattie argues that the purpose of philosophy is to make human life better, by explaining the workings of God and enabling human beings to be at peace with the world around them.

For Beattie, philosophy that undermines morality and general codes of conduct harms society. He argues that philosophy should generally be practical, and labels esoteric philosophy as detrimental to society.⁶⁷⁴ Coleridge argues that philosophical investigation must instill morality, but also a responsibility to investigate aspects of the human mind that should have no practical application: as "philosophy is neither a science of the reason or

⁶⁶⁹ Coleridge, *Biographia* 1:250.

⁶⁷⁰ Coleridge, *Biographia* 1:250. There are definite echoes of the Platonic notion of the ideal forms here, Coleridge argues that the inner sense is that which identifies the connection between the ideal and the external, and so sensations are governed by this intuitive faculty.

⁶⁷¹ See pp. 148-50 for eighteenth-century theories concerning the internal sense. In Beattie's system the internal sense is a broad term used to identify that which is perceived by the mind, but not through the external senses.

⁶⁷² See Lucretius and his attack on scepticism. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 4.502-27.

⁶⁷³ Coleridge, *Biographia* 1:251.

⁶⁷⁴ Beattie argues that scepticism is negative because it is speculative and without merit in human life. See pp. 160-61.

understanding only, nor merely a science of morals, but the science of BEING altogether, its primary ground can be neither merely speculative or merely practical, but both in one.”⁶⁷⁵

Coleridge is able to reconcile these generally opposing forces in philosophical discourse by building a system in which both are essential.

Coleridge argues that sceptical philosophers are in mislabelled as metaphysicians, they have: “perverted metaphysical reasonings to the denial of the mysteries and indeed of all the peculiar doctrines of christianity; and others even to the subversion of all distinction between right and wrong”⁶⁷⁶ and are those who take “advantage of the general neglect into which the science of logic has unhappily fallen, rather than metaphysicians.”⁶⁷⁷ Like Beattie, Coleridge admonishes those philosophers whose theories undermine the basis of Christian doctrines, and those that attempt to dissolve the fundamental tenets of morality.⁶⁷⁸

Though critics have hitherto focused on Coleridge’s critical engagement with Beattie’s poetry, his philosophical and critical works present an interesting context for many of the philosophical arguments of the Biographia. But Coleridge’s philosophical debt is often limited to German idealism, but his engagement with empirical systems of thought is important to an understanding of his philosophical arguments.⁶⁷⁹ Beattie’s philosophical and critical arguments were a part of the empirical tradition which Coleridge inherited, and his knowledge of, and engagement with, Beattie’s ideas present an interesting context for a reading of the Biographia.

⁶⁷⁵ Coleridge, Biographia 1:252.

⁶⁷⁶ Coleridge, Biographia 1:291.

⁶⁷⁷ Coleridge, Biographia 1:291.

⁶⁷⁸ Beattie’s defence of Christian tenets and morality in the face of sceptical philosophy is well documented.

⁶⁷⁹ For a detailed investigation into Coleridge’s engagement with some empirical philosophers, see James Engell’s chapter on Coleridge in The Creative Imagination, 328-66.

Duncan Wu's studies on Wordsworth's reading introduce the notion of a significant relationship between Beattie's works and those of Wordsworth. Wu proposes that Beattie's Original Poems and Translations influenced many of Wordsworth's his early poems. Wu illustrates a close poetic link between the two in some of Wordsworth's early poems such as "Vale of Esthwaite," and his translation of Horace Book III Ode 13,⁶⁸⁰ which contain verbal echoes and allusions to Beattie's early poems such as "Ode to Hope" and "Retirement, an Ode." He also proposes that Wordsworth read The Minstrel at a young age: "W was introduced to The Minstrel by his teacher, Thomas Bowman, during his schooldays at Hawkshead"⁶⁸¹ and that his interest in the poem continued thereafter: "He [Wordsworth] was fond of it,...and if he took any poetry to France, one would expect him to have taken The Minstrel."⁶⁸² While Wu highlights Wordsworth's engagement with Beattie's poetry, the popularity of Beattie's prose works during Wordsworth's adolescence supports the notion that the young Wordsworth "had almost certainly encountered the philosophical writings of James Beattie."⁶⁸³ Geoffrey Hartman acknowledges the verbal echoes of The Minstrel in the "Vale of Esthwaite" as well as the strong connection between the earlier poem and Wordsworth's own interest in the growth of the mind.⁶⁸⁴

In addition to the verbal echoes and allusions cited by Wu and Hartman, King points to a review of The Excursion in Blackwood's Magazine but does not develop it further.⁶⁸⁵ It is important to note the harshness with which Blackwood's reviewers generally attacked the works of the Lake Poets, but the points of this review that are relevant to Beattie speak to the

⁶⁸⁰ See Duncan Wu, Wordsworth's Reading (1770-1799) (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1993) 10-12, 68 and Duncan Wu, Wordsworth's Reading 1800-1815 (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1995) 221, 253.

⁶⁸¹ Wu, Reading 1770-1799 11.

⁶⁸² Wu, Reading 1770-1799 12.

⁶⁸³ Duncan Wu, Wordsworth: An Inner Life (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002) 16.

⁶⁸⁴ Geoffrey Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry: 1787-1814. (New Haven: 1964) 76-79.

⁶⁸⁵ King quotes a small fragment of the review but immediately shifts to the "Excursion" itself and the possibility of The Minstrel as Wordsworth's poetical model for the poem. King, Romantic Autobiography 96.

originality of the narrative's characters and setting, rather than Wordsworth's poetic skill.

John Wilson ("Christopher North") argues that the similarities in character between The Minstrel and The Excursion are significant, and points directly to the themes of the former.⁶⁸⁶

Wilson's review also points to the widespread readership of the poem well into the nineteenth century, and its enduring popularity: "We have most of us read Beattie's Minstrel, and some of us may return to that poem even after reading the Excursion, without feeling much disenchantment of the old charm which it exerted over us."⁶⁸⁷ The review quotes extensively from both poems to illustrate their close resemblance, and also argues that the general plan of The Excursion leads to "a vindication of those very principles of hope and faith which Beattie so well inculcated in his Minstrel."⁶⁸⁸ Clearly the complex thematic aspects of the poem were still well known in the nineteenth century, a fact which attests to the universality of the poem's themes, despite its didacticism with regard to sceptical philosophies and their proponents. This review of The Excursion illustrates the enduring popularity of The Minstrel as well as the continued investigation into its merit and themes by nineteenth century poets and critics.

Rather than providing a simple assessment of verbal echoes and possible borrowings, I wish to investigate a more thematic and philosophical link between the two poets. The fragment "Essay on Morals" provides evidence of Wordsworth's engagement with Beattie's version of common sense philosophy, while the preface to Lyrical Ballads illustrates his engagement with Beattie's ideas concerning poetry and the role of the poet. But it is The Prelude that throws into the sharpest relief the presence of Beattie's poetry and philosophical thought in Wordsworth's own mind.

⁶⁸⁶ "This is not the first time that the development of intellect and imagination in a humble mountain-boy has been made the subject of poetry, and of good poetry too." Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 5.44 (1838): 513.

⁶⁸⁷ Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 513.

⁶⁸⁸ Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 513.

The fragment “Essay on Morals”⁶⁸⁹ (probably 1798) presents Wordsworth’s ideas concerning the purpose of philosophical systems of morality. The arguments of this fragment are strikingly similar to Beattie’s argument against the manipulation of language in the Essay and The Minstrel. For Beattie, sceptical philosophers have “unhappily been too successful in producing that confusion of thought, and indistinctness of apprehension, ... which are so favourable to error and sophistry.”⁶⁹⁰ The Minstrel argues that scepticism is dangerous because it defies the limitations of human reasoning, by questioning the truthfulness of our senses and intuition. Beattie argues that we should accept the natural limitations of the human mind and reject philosophy “That aims to trace the secrets of the skies: / For thou art but of dust; be humble, and be wise” (l.449-50). According to Beattie, sceptics fail to acknowledge the limitations inherent in man’s intelligence, as we have seen, for him this arrogance has dangerous consequences.

Wordsworth argues that philosophers who rely upon wordplay and syllogisms “attempt to strip the mind of all its old clothing when their object ought to be to furnish it with new. All this is the consequence of an undue value set upon that faculty which we call reason.”⁶⁹¹ Wordsworth rejects moral systems built on abstract arguments, and those that rely on cunning word usage in favour of those that prepare the reader for daily life, which is an aspect of his reasoning which was ultimately incompatible with the ideas propounded by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.⁶⁹² The systems he condemns:

contain no picture of human life; they describe nothing. They in no respect enable us to be practically useful by informing us how men placed in

⁶⁸⁹ William Wordsworth, The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1974) 1:103-4.

⁶⁹⁰ Beattie, Essay 20.

⁶⁹¹ Wordsworth, The Prose Works 1:103.

⁶⁹² In Biographia Literaria Coleridge argues that philosophy “defines itself as an affectionate seeking after truth; but Truth is the correlative of Being” and it is this notion that truth can be discovered by reasoned argument that separated him from Wordsworth. Coleridge, Biographia 1:142.

such or such situations will necessarily act, & thence enabling us to apply ourselves to the means of turning them into a more beneficial course, if necessary, or of giving them new ardour & new knowledge when they are proceeding as they ought.⁶⁹³

This passage illustrates the close link between Wordsworth's condemnation and Beattie's arguments concerning the influence of language upon the mind, and the problematic nature of philosophical language.⁶⁹⁴ Beattie argues that the use of metaphorical expressions "has done great harm, by leading philosophers to mistake verbal analogies for real ones; and often, too, by giving plausibility to nonsense, as well as by disguising and perplexing very plain doctrines with an affected pomp of high-sounding words and gaudy images."⁶⁹⁵

The problematic nature of philosophical language Beattie identifies is clearly expressed in this passage, and a later one articulates a purpose for philosophical investigation similar to Beattie's. The essential purpose for philosophy which Wordsworth outlines is strikingly similar to that in Beattie's Essay. Here he argues that philosophy should enrich life and enable humans to understand the workings of God and the universe in a way that will benefit society. He argues that sceptical philosophers do great harm to society because "they want to prove, or to disprove, what I know by instinct to be unquestionably certain..."⁶⁹⁶

Wordsworth illustrates these particular fears in the Fenwick note⁶⁹⁷ to "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood": "I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not

⁶⁹³ Wordsworth, The Prose Works 1:103-4.

⁶⁹⁴ I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Gavin Budge, who initially suggested this relationship, and pointed me to some of the above quotations.

⁶⁹⁵ Beattie, Essay 46.

⁶⁹⁶ Beattie, Essay 340.

⁶⁹⁷ Robin Dix highlights Wordsworth's youthful fear of the consequences of indulgence in scepticism, and he makes it clear that in adulthood Wordsworth considered such terrifying experiences to be valuable, and they became his Spots of Time. Robin C. Dix, "Wordsworth and Lucretius: The Psychological Impact of Creech's Translation," ELN 39 (2002): 25-33.

apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality.”⁶⁹⁸

This passage recalls the consequences of scepticism Wordsworth perceived in his youth, which is reminiscent of Beattie’s own concerns. However, in adulthood Wordsworth diverged from Beattie’s sentiments, and considered such transcendental experiences to be valuable.⁶⁹⁹

Both Beattie and Wordsworth argue that scepticism is detrimental to the daily workings of society, because it undermines the foundations of human relationships and morality in general. For both Wordsworth and Beattie philosophy should improve society and make human life easier. Wordsworth’s engagement with Beattie’s literary criticism also presents an interesting context for the “Preface” to the 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads. The primary purposes of the preface are to justify the use of rural setting and colloquial language in the forthcoming poems, since they present a style hitherto denoted as “low,” and to introduce the volume’s general themes. Wordsworth gives two reasons for the setting of the poems in a rural society: “the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and from the necessary character of rural occupations are more easily comprehended; and are more durable; and lastly, because in that situation the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature.”⁷⁰⁰ Wordsworth goes on to argue that “a language arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings is a more permanent and far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets.”⁷⁰¹ Beattie, too, argues that poets should utilise language that is natural rather than manipulate

⁶⁹⁸ William Wordsworth, The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth, ed. Jared Curtis (Bristol: Bristol Classical P, 1993) 61.

⁶⁹⁹ See pp. 296-97, which discusses this divergence in greater detail.

⁷⁰⁰ William Wordsworth, Lyrical Ballads: Wordsworth and Coleridge: The text of the 1798 Edition with the 1800 additional Poems and the Prefaces, ed. K.L. Brett and A. R. Jones (London: Methuen, 1963) 239.

⁷⁰¹ Wordsworth, Lyrical Ballads 239-40.

language with figures, because it will sound contrived. For him, poetic language must imitate natural language, since poetry is measured in terms of its imitation and resemblance to nature. And he delves into the use of figurative language, defining natural language in “On Poetry and Music”⁷⁰² as “that use of speech, or of artificial language, which is suitable to the speaker and to the occasion.”⁷⁰³

Although he cautions against the excessive use of figurative language, the use of “Tropes and Figures promote[s] brevity; and brevity, united with perspicuity, is always agreeable”⁷⁰⁴ and heightens the pleasure of readers, thus increasing the poem’s power, and illustrating the judgement of the poet. While they generally agree that poetry is grounded in experience in nature, Wordsworth goes somewhat further, by recognising that the manipulation of figurative language by poets can lead to a distortion of poetry and the character of the poet. But ultimately the most important similarity between the two poets can surely be found in Wordsworth’s argument concerning the purpose of poetry, which is ultimately to articulate the truths apparent in the natural world.

The following passage of the “preface” echoes Beattie’s definition of truth, and the basic doctrine of common sense is used to reinforce the connection between man and nature. Wordsworth begins by supporting the philosophical nature of poetry, and then expresses his own interpretation of Beattie’s common sense:

Aristotle...hath said, that Poetry is the most philosophical of writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual or local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives strength and divinity to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal.

⁷⁰² See pp. 239-41.

⁷⁰³ Beattie, Essays 194.

⁷⁰⁴ Beattie, Essays 241.

Poetry is the image of man and nature.⁷⁰⁵

This passage recalls Beattie's assertion that there is inherent truth which cannot be proven by arguments. He had insisted that belief in truth of this kind is the result of the human constitution, and that any questioning of such truths (as done by sceptical philosophers) is dangerous to society.⁷⁰⁶ Beattie also argues in "On Poetry and Music" that poetry must represent nature,⁷⁰⁷ but the products of the mind that result from experience in nature can surpass the original in power, because "nothing sensible transcends, or equals the capacity of thought:— a striking evidence of the dignity of the human soul."⁷⁰⁸ Wordsworth also asserts that the poet "considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature."⁷⁰⁹ Both authors recognise the importance of the interactions with nature with poetry, and both argue that poetry necessarily derives from nature, but their thoughts diverge when it comes to the specific characteristics of that connection.

For Wordsworth, the poetic genius "is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind."⁷¹⁰ Beattie's arguments concerning poetic genius operate on the assumption that his readers would be familiar with the arguments made by William Sharpe, Alexander Gerard, William Duff, and Edward Young,⁷¹¹ and begin by identifying the pleasure which the poetic genius takes in nature, going on to argue that accurate observation of nature

⁷⁰⁵ Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads* 251.

⁷⁰⁶ See Beattie's definition of common sense pp. 144-45, and his definition of truth pp. 143-44.

⁷⁰⁷ Beattie argues that poetry must be natural to please, see p. 233.

⁷⁰⁸ Beattie, *Essays* 46.

⁷⁰⁹ Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads* 253.

⁷¹⁰ Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads* 249.

⁷¹¹ For a description of their systems concerning genius and the imagination see p. 17-19 and the influence of these theories on *The Minstrel* see pp. 100-3.

is essential to the development of poetic genius, because the poet's work is an imitation of nature.

The limited modern attention to Beattie's poetry has led many critics to consider The Prelude: Or, Growth of a Poet's Mind as "the first example of what has since become a major genre: the account of the growth of an individual mind to artistic maturity, and of the sources of creative powers."⁷¹² However, The Minstrel; or, The Progress of Genius- several decades earlier- also deals with the growth of a youth into intellectual maturity, the poet's interaction with the natural world, and the way in which scientific or philosophical knowledge can depress the workings of the imagination. There is also a particularly philosophical turn to The Minstrel, and its philosophical investigations are not limited to the qualities of genius; it vilifies scepticism and deals with familiar topics, such as ambition, pleasure, and the sublime.

While the corpus of Beattie's poetry has only recently been collected and republished, his poetic reputation remained strong well into the nineteenth century. Dorothy Wordsworth quotes Beattie in order to describe her brother's character: "'In truth he was a strange and wayward wight fond of each gentle—' etc., etc. That verse of Beattie's 'Minstrel' always reminds me of him [Wordsworth], and indeed the whole character of Edwin resembles much what William was when I first knew him."⁷¹³ Wordsworth comments that the Spenserian stanza "is exquisitely harmonious also in Thomson's hands and fine in Beattie's Minstrel"⁷¹⁴ but his letters do not reveal any overt engagement with Beattie's philosophy. However, there are various close echoes of Beattie's common sense philosophy in The Prelude, as in the 1800 preface to Lyrical Ballads, and poetic similarities which I believe are not coincidental.

⁷¹² Preface to William Wordsworth, The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York: Norton, 1979) ix.

⁷¹³ D. W. to Jane Pollard, 10 July 1793. The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: (1787-1850), ed. Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1935) 97-98.

⁷¹⁴ W.W. to Catherine Grace Godwin, Spring 1829. The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, Revised by Chester L. Shaver 8 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967) 5:58.

The Prelude is Wordsworth's philosophical investigation into his development into maturity as both a man and a poet. The imagination and the growth of a poet's mind from childhood to adolescence occupy both poets, but Wordsworth goes into more detail and depicts the changes that occur into adulthood. These reflections are overt in The Prelude but are not absent from The Minstrel, because Beattie's treatment of his youthful experiences highlights the values of his middle age. The effect of education on the imagination is central to the development of both poets, but Wordsworth is able to depict in striking images its emotional and intellectual impact in ways that Beattie only suggests in The Minstrel. The education of Beattie's minstrel by nature is essential to his poetic development, and this is contrasted by his formal education by the Hermit, whose instruction ultimately brings about an intellectual conflict between nature and education which the poem does not solve.

The relationship which he builds between his swain and the natural world is strikingly similar to that of Wordsworth's youthful poet, who embodies a modern Romantic Edwin; a poet whose interactions with nature inspire him to contemplate the highest characteristics of human beings. The Prelude deals with Wordsworth's intellectual growth including his commitment to the ideas of the French Revolution and his philosophical investigations into the workings of the imagination, the sublime, and the moral characteristics of human beings. The poem investigates the way in which nature and education affect the poetic imagination, and the implications of the poetic sensibility for daily activities. The poem engages with Beattie's earlier poetic investigation into the growth of a poetic mind born into rural scenery, and also makes philosophical claims which reflect a knowledge and working through of the common sense expounded by Beattie in the Essay.

The action of The Minstrel takes place amidst striking natural scenery, and the poem explores the impact of this scenery upon Edwin's imagination, and the consequences of immersion in nature on the developing poetic mind. Edwin is characterised as a youth whose experiences with nature evoke the emotions associated with the sublime. The poem's depiction of a sublime scene and its impact on his youthful imagination illustrate the kind of engagement with nature that also occupies much of The Prelude:

What dreadful pleasure! there to stand sublime,
Like shipwreck'd mariner on desert coast,
And view th' enormous waste of vapour, tost
In billows, lengthening to th' horizon round,
Now scooped in gulfs, with mountains now emboss'd! (l. 183-87).⁷¹⁵

Beattie's depiction of sublimity in the poem initiates the poet's meditations on those experiences. This scene also locates the youth amongst powerful natural forces that work upon his mind without guidance or hindrance, while Book II illustrates the problematic aspects of this intense bond with the natural world and the creations it inspires in the mind. The character of Edwin is similar in many respects, for instance in his proclivity for solitude amidst the natural world. Like Wordsworth he sought solitude: he "roam'd at large the lonely mountain's head; / Or, where the maze of some bewilder'd stream / To deep untrodden groves his footsteps led" (l.149-51). For each poet solitary experience in nature is essential to the development of the imagination, as it introduces powerful and terrifying experiences to the mind which are essential to poetry.⁷¹⁶

⁷¹⁵ For the context of this quotation and its relationship with Lucretius, see pp. 113-14.

⁷¹⁶ For Beattie solitude in the natural world is essential to the growth of the poetic mind, see "Retirement, an Ode," pp. 30-33. The first two books of The Prelude illustrate the importance of solitary contemplation upon the youthful poet. See pp.298-300.

The sublime creations of the imagination inspired by nature are for Beattie, ultimately negative to the mind despite their aesthetic allure, because they instil horror, and are damaging to the soul: “But, in the mental world, what chaos drear! / What forms of mournful, loathsome, furious mien!” (II.177-78). The images it fosters can harm the psyche of the poet as well as that of the reader. Wordsworth’s depiction of the sublime does not share Beattie’s apprehensive tone, but his concern with the consequences of Godwinian rationalism is similar to Beattie’s concern with scepticism. Wordsworth recalls his commitment to a rationalist philosophy “so pure that it could not admit a spiritual dimension to life”⁷¹⁷ in Book X:

Thus I fared,
 Dragging all passions, notions, shapes of faith,
 Like culprits to the bar, suspiciously
 Calling the mind to establish in plain day
 Her titles and her honours, now believing,
 Now disbelieving, endlessly perplexed
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 Of moral obligation—what the rule,
 And what the sanction—till, demanding proof,
 And seeking it in every thing, I lost
 All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
 Sick, wearied out with contrarities,
 Yielded up moral questions in despair (X. 888-900).

Godwinian rationalism argues that “all human knowledge is the result of perception. We know nothing of any substance but by experience. If it produced no effects, it would be no

⁷¹⁷ Dix, “Lucretius” 28.

subject of human intelligence.”⁷¹⁸ The Godwinian system does not admit the existence of moral imperatives that are not initially garnered by perception and experience. In this way, rationalism is more closely linked to empiricism than has been traditionally allowed. Clearly for Wordsworth, “where reason is dependent upon sense data in order to function, rationalism will lead ultimately to solipsistic scepticism, just as surely as empiricism does.”⁷¹⁹ This preoccupation with the destructive consequences of rationalism is similar to Beattie’s nervousness concerning the negative implications of scepticism. Wordsworth’s treatment of the sublime is clearly illustrated in the stolen boat sequence of Book I of The Prelude. The famous stolen boat episode highlights the frightening and powerful natural images which are capable of inspiring the imagination better than any human instruction. Like Edwin, the young Wordsworth does not at the time wholly comprehend the implications of the sublime experiences of his youthful wanderings. It was the supreme power of the imagination to interpret images of the sublime into negative thoughts which worried Beattie.

By contrast, Wordsworth argued that sublime poetry is capable of elevating the mind above sensual human desires and connects the reader/viewer with intangible positive emotions which are meant to improve the mind rather than distract it from moral virtues and the daily operations of life.⁷²⁰ Here Wordsworth highlights the capacity of the sublime to affect the conscious and subconscious mind, without any suggestion that discomfort or damage would occur as a result. The end of the stolen boat episode illustrates the staggering power of sublime images with no hint of the negative consequences that worried Beattie.⁷²¹

⁷¹⁸ William Godwin, An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, ed. Mark Philip Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin (London: Pickering, 1993) 159.

⁷¹⁹ Dix, “Lucretius” 29.

⁷²⁰ Beattie also makes this argument in “Illustrations on Sublimity.” See pp. 262-63.

⁷²¹ “But huge and mighty forms that do not live / Like living men moved slowly through my mind / By day, and were a trouble to my dreams” (I. 420-22).

Beattie illustrates its power and cautions against what he considers to be its negative consequences while reinforcing its moral purpose, while Wordsworth presents the sublime experience in nature as integral to the growth of the poetic imagination, and recognizes its disturbing power as a moral lesson, inspired by fear as much as by beauty. Edwin's innocence and instinctual attachment to the sublime in nature is evident from the depictions in the poem of his interactions in nature. The similarities in character which Dorothy Wordsworth identified between Beattie's receptive, innocent swain and William illustrate the fundamental similarities between the poetic characters developed in these two poems. Edwin is introduced in sublime natural scenery, and the speaker introduces the relationship between humans and nature that is central to the poem:

Nor less, than when on ocean-wave serene
 The southern sun diffused his dazzling shene
 Even sad vicissitude amused his soul:
 And if a sigh would sometimes intervene,
 And down his cheek a tear of pity would roll,
 A sigh, a tear, so sweet, he wish'd not to control" (I. 193-98).⁷²²

This empathy with the natural world and humanity's emotional and intellectual response to it is also, of course, repeatedly depicted in The Prelude-for instance:

While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
 With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
 Blow through my ears; the sky seemed not a sky
 Of earth, and with what motion moved the clouds! (I. 347-50).

⁷²² The sentiment expressed in this passage is echoed by Wordsworth in "Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." The use of "tears" links The Minstrel to this passage: "Thanks to the human heart by which we live, / Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears, / To me the meanest flower that blows can give / Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." (199-202).

Though these scenes do not at first glance appear to be connected, both recall scenes of great natural power, and their emotional impact upon the speaker. But Wordsworth transcends Beattie, and uses this setting as a spring board for an investigation into the transcendental potential in the mind, which is sparked by sublime experiences in nature.

Nature's operations are interpreted by the mind and so become translated into human terms. As Albert Wlecke argues, for Wordsworth the sublime consciousness "is not necessarily a sudden intrusion into ordinary consciousness, accompanied by the profoundly felt emotions of abrupt of astonishment and amazement. Such a consciousness is also— at least in the circumstances of his youth in the Lake Country— a structure of awareness that can be gradually elicited by nature."⁷²³ This passage is also reminiscent of the emotions evoked by Beattie's description of Edwin's first view of the sea⁷²⁴ which depicts a similar scene of sublimity and leads to the development of empathy in the later passage. The education garnered through interaction with the natural world is contrasted by that provided by human beings, and the consequences of these experiences are central to the thematic development of both of these poems.

Despite the interruptions of formal education upon Wordsworth's interactions with the natural world, his imagination still thrives:

My first creative sensibility,
That by the regular action of the world
My soul was unsubdued. A plastic power
Abode with me, a forming hand, at times
Rebellious, acting in a devious mood,
A local spirit of its own, at war

⁷²³ Albert Wlecke, *Wordsworth and the Sublime* (Berkeley and London: U. of California P, 1973) 61.

⁷²⁴ See pp. 113-14.

With general tendency, but for the most
 Subservient strictly to the external things
 With which it communed (II. 379-87).

The external objects of the natural world are essential to the development of the imagination, because it is through this experience that the mind is able to grow and realise the power of the imagination as a mental faculty. The workings of the imagination are undiminished by the constraints placed upon it by education, (although political commitment becomes more seriously problematic in books 9 and 10), and in The Minstrel Edwin's education by the Hermit leads him to look upon nature with a more critical eye, but it does not diminish his pleasure in the natural world: in his mind poetry "Still claim th' Enthusiast's fond and first regard. / From Nature's beauties variously combined, he learns to frame" (II. 517-18) the products of his imagination. Edwin explores the natural world with a more studious eye, and so he tempers his poetry with his newly acquired knowledge of human history and philosophies of the mind. Both poems deal with the consequences of formal education upon the creative powers.

After his education by the Hermit, the connection between Edwin and nature has irrevocably changed; the natural world has become a conscious inspiration rather than a sympathetic entity of its own. Nature: "Tempers his rage: he owns her charm divine, / And clears th' ambiguous phrase, and lops th' unwieldy line" (II. 530-1). The images of nature and the sublime are now weighed by his taste and judgement, which are faculties that enable thoughtful engagement and the creative process. Wordsworth's poet is very much akin to the newly educated Edwin.

The poem is primarily a narrative of his intellectual growth and the inevitable destruction of innocence by education:

This history, my friend, hath chiefly told
 Of intellectual power from stage to stage
 Advancing hand in hand with love and joy,
 And of imagination teaching truth
 Until that natural graciousness of mind
 Gave way to over-pressure of the times
 And their disastrous issues (XI.42-8).

The final two lines of this passage illustrate Wordsworth's concern with the lure of rationalism and political commitment as a distraction from nature's inspiration on the imagination. Wordsworth also investigates the importance of nature and its dominance even over human investigations. He praises Samuel Taylor Coleridge for recognising that nature cannot be held as subservient to the laws and sciences of man, to nature:

Science appears but what in truth she is,
 Not as our glory and our absolute boast,
 But as a succedaneum, and a prop
 To our infirmity. Thou art no slave
 Of that false secondary power by which
 In weakness we create distinctions, then
 Deem that our puny boundaries are things
 Which we perceive, not which we have made (II. 217-24).

By 'science' Wordsworth as eighteenth-century authors before him, refers to "philosophy or

the inquiry after truth in the widest sense.”⁷²⁵ While sciences are meant to demystify the workings of the natural world, science is still subject to its laws, which gives nature the ultimate advantage over science. Despite the proposed supremacy, sciences cannot take the place of nature in the development of a poet’s mind.

Though The Minstrel ends with no resolution of Edwin’s educational crisis, the poem does address the issues raised by education and makes similar claims to those made by Wordsworth. Edwin’s education by the Hermit leaves him with a desire for his now lost innocence, because his education has weakened rather than strengthened his confidence in the virtues of humanity.⁷²⁶ This is an intensely autobiographical moment in the poem, in which the older more experienced Beattie mourns the loss of his innocence. Wordsworth recalls a similar scene that evokes these sentiments when describing the innocent joy of knowledge that enriches rather than detracts from human happiness:

Many are the joys
Of youth, but oh! what happiness to live
When every hour brings palpable access
Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,
And sorrow is not there (II. 304-8).

Beattie and Wordsworth depict their early intellectual innocence in terms of the dichotomy between the positive knowledge of nature and the problematic knowledge gained by formal education.

⁷²⁵ Karina Williamson, “Akenside and the ‘Lamp of Science’,” Mark Akenside: A Reassessment, ed. Robin Dix (London: Associated UP, 2000) 52.

⁷²⁶ Edwin asks the Hermit to: “Restore those tranquil days, that saw me still/ Well pleased with all, but more with humankind; / When fancy roved through Nature’s works at will, / Uncheck’d by cold distrust, and uninform’d by ill” (II. 258-61).

Wordsworth credits books with providing his infant mind with gruesome knowledge, which is tempered by an invisible force, as shown in the depiction of the drowned man:

For my inner eye had seen
Such sights before among the shining streams
Of fairyland, the forests of romance—
Thence came a spirit hallowing what I saw
With decoration and ideal grace,
A dignity, a smoothness, like the words
Of Grecian art and purest poesy (V. 475-81).

For Wordsworth there is a sense that the creations of the imagination can include horrifying images which are tempered by the processes of the mind, and their product is the finest poetry.

For Beattie, the images of horror of the sublime are beneficial only when they are disconnected from any actual suffering, because the sublime cannot be evoked from images of torture of others, whose indulgence would naturally lead to moral approbation. The Hermit invokes philosophy, “To curb Imagination’s lawless rage” (II. 399). This line further reinforces the notion articulated by Duff; that judgement, which results from knowledge, must govern the products of the imagination.⁷²⁷ The Hermit invokes disciplines that are intended to temper the imagination, and reinforce the importance of taste and judgement as the governing faculties of the imagination.

Without education as represented by the Hermit, the untaught imagination has the capacity to confuse fiction with reality and can lead to negative emotions which are damaging to the soul. Wordsworth by contrast argues that the imagination interprets perceptions of the

⁷²⁷ Duff also argues that the study of classical authors can improve genius, but not give the rule to genius.

outside world, and that education, specifically that which refines language, enables the poet better to express the ideas of the imagination, while but also illustrating the consequences of knowledge which distorts the natural use of language:

I was a better judge of thoughts than words,
 Misled as to these latter not alone
 By common inexperience of youth,
 But by the trade in classic niceties,
 Delusion to young scholars incident—
 And by old ones also—by that overprized
 And dangerous craft of picking phrases out
 From languages that want the living voice
 To make of them a nature to the heart,
 To tell us what is passion, what is truth,
 What reason, what simplicity and sense. (VI. 124-34).

This passage warns against manipulation of language that intrudes upon the transmission of universal truths and characteristics of human nature. This warning is similar to that made in the Essay, which argues that “the ambiguity of its [sceptical philosophy] language, and the intricacy and length of some of its fundamental investigations, have unhappily been too successful in producing that confusion of thought, and indistinctness of apprehension, in the minds of both authors and readers, which are so favourable to error and sophistry.”⁷²⁸ It also highlights the consequences of the manipulation of language that Beattie argued sceptical philosophers used to prove the futility of commonly held beliefs.

⁷²⁸ Beattie, Essay 19-20.

Beattie attacks these philosophers in The Minstrel in strong terms, which illustrates his desire to discredit scepticism in poetry as well as prose.⁷²⁹ The sceptics attempt to reach beyond reason's limitations, by questioning the truthfulness of our senses and intuition. Beattie argues that the existence of the universe is known in the same fashion as the existence of self, which is rooted in his definitions of truth and belief.⁷³⁰ His allusions to the consequences of this kind of language are only hinted at initially by Wordsworth, but in the following passage in Book XI he outlines the consequences of rationalism in terms akin to Beattie's:

The wizard instantaneously dissolves
 Palace or grove, even so did I unsoul
 As readily by syllogistic words
 (Some charm of logic, ever within reach)
 Those mysteries of passion which have made,
 And shall continue evermore to make—
 In spite of all that reason hath performed,
 And shall perform, to exalt and to refine—
 One brotherhood of all the human race (XI. 80-88).

Wordsworth condemns those who manipulate language to discredit mundane subjects, because this leads to the rejection of commonly held truths of humanity, which are essential to the doctrine of common sense. He indirectly condemns empiricist philosophers who use syllogisms to disprove the doctrines of liberty, and free will, but also supports Beattie's philosophy, which insists that common sense enables humans to discern self evident truth and cannot be overturned through clever use of language.

⁷²⁹ See pp. 100-4.

⁷³⁰ See pp. 144-46.

Wordsworth's poetical engagement with common sense philosophy is also clear in Book XI, in which Wordsworth's purpose for the poem reinforces the faith in self-evident truths which Beattie's relies upon in both the Essay on Truth and The Minstrel, but for Wordsworth considers this truth and human knowledge compliment each other. In the following passage Wordsworth explains that truth is acquired through the faculty of the imagination, which interprets experiences in nature into truth:

This history, my friend, hath chiefly told
Of intellectual power from stage to stage
Advancing hand in hand with love and joy,
And of imagination teaching truth... (XI. 42-45).

Beattie does not make any connection between truth and the imagination in this manner, but the truth that Wordsworth argues comes from experience in nature is more akin to the self-evident truths of Beattie's common sense philosophy than the empirical investigations of his contemporaries.

Wordsworth defines the attributes that distinguish humans from other forms of life in common sense terms, namely that the reasoning faculty, and other operations of the mind, are the gift of the divine, and therefore require no in-depth explanation by philosophers: "Such minds are truly from the Deity, / For they are powers; and hence the highest bliss / That flesh can know is theirs" (XIII.106-8). For Wordsworth the highest pleasure open to humans is that which comes from the reasoning faculty, which connects enables humans to connect with their divine creator. He denies the notion that the validity of religious doctrines and philosophies of the mind can be tested by complex philosophical systems such as rationalism, because its inevitable end leads to the destruction of spirituality.

Conclusion

By examining the poetical works and relevant prose of James Beattie in order of publication, I have shown that modern scholarship has generally underestimated the value and importance of these works, and the publication history supports the notion that they were well known and circulated up to the twentieth-century. I have aimed in this comprehensive and contextual study of Beattie's works to enhance our understanding of Beattie's important contributions to many eighteenth-century debates, and his influence upon later generations. As I have shown in the initial chapter of this study, Beattie's dismissal of his early poetry was also part of his insecurity, and his desire to be remembered by posterity as a serious thinker and teacher rather than an experimental poet. Beattie's wish seems to have been granted by the twentieth-century, since only eleven separate editions of Beattie's works were published between 1900 and 1990. Of those eleven editions, eight of them are reprints of his critical and moral works, one is a small collection of previously unpublished letters, and the final two are reprints of Beattie's housekeeping and intellectual duties; the diary of his eventual trip to London in 1773, and the day-book he kept from 1773-1798.

Though Beattie's published works are widely published and known in the nineteenth-century, I believe that one of the reasons critics have overlooked him stems from his staunch empirical views. I think the movement of Romantic poets from empiricism to a philosophical outlook deeply rooted in sensation and emotion, meant that Beattie's works were considered to be too empiricist and archaic.

In Lamia Keats laments the disenchantment that results from empirical investigation, which is in direct opposition with the Romantic philosophy of the natural world, which sought to celebrate the beauty of the world without attempting to dissect it, as their philosophical predecessors had done. Keats's famous "negative capability" letter explains in precise language the Romantic frustration with the empirical method of investigation they inherited: "I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."⁷³¹ I believe that Keats articulates the frustration and disillusionment with empiricists and their works that led to the decline in Beattie's popularity, as well as the critical underestimation of his subsequent influence and his contemporary importance.

From Philip Sidney's Defence of Poesy (1595) poetry had been considered a powerful method of investigating complex intellectual matters. Sidney argues that other disciplines utilise poetic devices to entertain and to gain a wide audience: "So that truly neither philosopher nor historiographer could at the first have entered into the gates of popular judgements, if they had not taken a great passport of Poetry..."⁷³² But the easy reconciliation of the imagination and reasoning is under threat in the late seventeenth century with the rise of sensibility. From the beginning of Beattie's career as a poet, he attempted to reconcile poetic imagination and creativity with philosophical explication and reasoning. For him the faculties of the poetic imagination and the reasoning power used in philosophy were at odds from the outset. Though he perceived an impenetrable divide between poetry and philosophy, his poetry illustrates his desire to reconcile these two opposing forces within his mind if at all possible.

⁷³¹ Keats to George and Tom Keats, 21, 27 (?) December 1817. John Keats, Selected Letters of John Keats, ed. Grant F. Scott (Cambridge Mass: Harvard UP, 2002) 60.

⁷³² Sir Philip Sidney, An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poesy, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd revised by R. W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1965) 83.

In a letter to Charles Boyd in late 1766, while he was deeply occupied with the composition of the Essay on Truth and The Minstrel he speculates upon the incompatibility between philosophical and poetic genius that will ultimately lead to his decision to abandon his career as a poet.⁷³³ Beattie begins by questioning the success of philosophical poets before him, and introduces in plain language the conflict between philosophical investigation and poetic creativity that haunts him in his career:

Do you not think there is a sort of antipathy between philosophical and poetical genius? I question, whether any one person was ever eminent for both. Lucretius lays aside the poet when he assumes the philosopher, and the philosopher when he assumes the poet: In the one character he is truly excellent, in the other he is absolutely nonsensical. Hobbes was a tolerable metaphysician, but his poetry is the worst that ever was. ”⁷³⁴

This letter reveals the inherent disconnection between the faculties in Beattie’s mind, though his poetry represents his strong desire to reconcile them in imaginative and intellectually stimulating ways. The fact that Beattie perceives failure in these eminent persons to reconcile poetry and prose sheds light on the origination of his own insecurity concerning his abilities to poetically express philosophical ideas.

His insecurity is apparent later in the letter, when he addresses the failings of Milton (whom Beattie considered to be the greatest English poet) to resolve this conflict: “Observe the effect of argumentation in poetry; we have too many instances of it in Milton: it transforms the noblest thoughts into drawling inferences, and the most beautiful language

⁷³³ I also refer to this letter in the context of Beattie’s final three editions of his poems, see p. 206.

⁷³⁴ Beattie to Charles Boyd, 16 November 1766. W. Forbes, 1:93-4.

This significant letter to Charles Boyd illustrates that Beattie's informed and conscious decision to abandon poetry, and to turn his talents to critical and philosophical prose in an effort to educate and entertain, came gradually as the result Beattie's acceptance of the incompatibility between philosophy and poetry. Beattie's inability to reconcile the poetic and philosophical imagination is rooted in his perceptions of the properties of the philosophical and imaginative parts of the mind, as well as the dangerous consequences he perceived of uniting the products of the imagination (i.e. poetry) and intellectual investigation. This insecurity concerning the way in which philosophical investigation can be manipulated and re-branded by the imagination.

It is clear in the proceeding analysis of Beattie's poems that the characteristics of poetic genius and the methods of literary self-fashioning are present from the beginning of his career. The investigation into the works of Wordsworth illustrates that Beattie's exploration of the growth of the poetically inclined mind to intellectual maturity had far reaching influence upon poets of the next generation. Since Beattie is more representative of his time than more pronounced talents, his self-conscious development of his career, as it unfolds over the course of his works, gives us new insight into the accepted modes and conventions of the development of an ambitious literary career in the eighteenth-century. By examining the kind of care and concern that Beattie showed with regard to his reputation as a poet from the start, we can better understand the wider conventions of building a literary reputation in the later eighteenth-century.

The study of Beattie's career is also insightful in terms of his engagement with the changing system of patronage in the eighteenth-century. His relationship with his first patron sparked his first translation of philosophical poetry, his influential friends in London in the 1770's helped to secure him his royal pension, and his role as patron to Alexander Ross

brings his journey through this system full circle. I have endeavoured to show that his career exemplifies the changing aspects of patronage, and how an author/intellectual would navigate his way through its waters.

Beattie's desire to use poetry as a vehicle for his philosophical and religious inquiries is evident from his inaugural volume of poetry, Original Poems and Translations (1760/1), through to his final volume, The Minstrel, in Two Books, With Some Other Poems (1784). Throughout his career as a poet Beattie concerns himself with many contemporary philosophical, moral, and political issues, such as the effects of the Seven Years War and an indulgence in sensual pleasures, the conflict between the philosophical and poetic imagination, the characteristics of poetic genius, and the adequacy of consolation offered by firm belief in the Christian afterlife. The poem chapters in this study track the progression of Beattie's ideas concerning these various issues, and illustrate the firm connection between his poetry and importance political, social, and philosophical subjects of the eighteenth-century.

An important part of Beattie's literary legacy is of course the Essay on Truth, which is significant in terms of Beattie's own career as well as the philosophical debate surrounding scepticism as well as the influence of its doctrines upon his poetry. His philosophy articulates in precise language many commonplace eighteenth-century objections to the empirical suppositions of David Hume, and sceptical doctrines generally that began as an unfortunate consequence of Locke's empiricism. This study presents compelling evidence that Beattie raises important contemporary issues, and had far reaching intellectual influence.

The publication of his various critical works throws into sharp relief his desire to affect the education of future generations positively. For this study I have chosen to focus on those essays concerning sublimity, memory, the nature of poetry and poetic genius, and ridicule; because they deal with the fundamental issues that animate Beattie's poetry.

The corpus of Beattie's critical writings, though it presents many commonplace eighteenth-century arguments, is interesting within the context of larger intellectual movements, and when seen in the context of Beattie's professional and personal decline, they become all the more compelling. They represent his continuing commitment to education toward the end of his career, and his desire to leave a critical foundation for future students.

The career of James Beattie was wide-ranging and productive. His career exemplifies the Romantic and post-Romantic bind between philosophical reasoning and poetic inspiration, as well as the desire to consciously craft a legacy and reputation for posterity. His poetic imagination was hindered by his commitment to philosophical investigations as well as personal tragedies, but his critical essays show a continued desire to positively impact his society. Beattie's career as a poet in many ways exemplifies an eighteenth century inability to resolve the conflict between intellectual reasoning and poetic inclinations. From the outset of his career, Beattie is concerned with the nature of poetic genius, and its ability to distract the mind from essential duties and operations of daily life. Though modern scholarship has relatively neglected him, the corpus of his works has had a lasting impact on poetry, philosophy, and criticism in the eighteenth century and beyond.

Appendix

Dating *Original Poems and Translations*

The dating of Original Poems and translations initially presented a number of questions. The book appears with both a 1760 and 1761 title page, without any other significant differences. Settling the actual date of publication is important because the events in Beattie's life around this time were also significant. The first reference to Original Poems and Translations is made in the *Aberdeen Journal*, 18 March 1760. "PROPOSALS for printing by SUBSCRIPTION. In an Octavo volume, with an elegant TYPE, and fine Paper"¹ were being collected from booksellers in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Montrose. The next mention of the volume in the same periodical comes in December of 1760: "In the Press, and will be published about the first of February next, ORIGINAL POEMS and TRANSLATIONS, By J. Beattie, A.M."² This is in fact the same edition that was advertised earlier in the year, which was expected before the end of 1760. It seems that copies with the 1760 dating are the result of the first, more conservative run, and those with the 1761 dating were printed as a result of the quick sales of the first edition. This delay could have been caused by Beattie's endeavour to secure appointment to the chair of Philosophy at Marischal, which occurred between May and October of 1760, and Beattie's insecurity concerning the venture also lends weight to the idea that the 1760 version was a small run printed to test the public's reception.

¹ *Aberdeen Journal*, 636 (March 1760): 4.

² *Aberdeen Journal*, 674 (December 1760): 4.

The publication date of 1761 fits the events of Beattie's life and evidence in the volume better than 1760. In a letter to his friend and patron Robert Arbuthnot dated 21 October 1760 Beattie enclosed the proposed preface to his poems, and the dedication of the work to the Earl of Erroll also suggests the publication date of 1761. Through Arbuthnot, Beattie enlisted the help of the Earl to secure him the vacant position at Marischal. The dedication is "in Testimony of the Utmost Esteem and Gratitude"³ for his intervention with the Duke of Argyll on Beattie's behalf. Beattie did not know his petition through the Earl was successful until the end of September 1760.⁴ Therefore Beattie would have no reason to compose that dedication until the end of September at the earliest.

A more thorough advertisement for the edition appears 16 February 1761, obviously a fortnight later than originally intended. It proves that Beattie's book was being launched by numerous booksellers in a variety of areas: "ORIGINAL POEMS AND TRANSLATION, By JAMES BEATTIE, A.M. London: Printed and folded by A. Millar in the Strand, and folded by the Booksellers of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Montrose, and Aberdeen."⁵ The 1761 edition does not vary from its predecessor in any technical respects, which supports the notion that the type setting was done in late 1760 with a small run printed, and based on its quick success a more ambitious and larger run was printed in early 1761.

³ James Beattie, *OPT* the dedication.

⁴ Bower, 146.

⁵ *Aberdeen Journal*, 684 (February 1761): 4.

Textual Changes to Book I of The Minstrel

Stanza IV in 1771 edition (cut for all subsequent editions)

Life's slender sustenance his only meed;
 'Twas all he hoped, and all his heart desired,
 And such Dan Homer was, if right I read,
 Though with gifts of every muse inspired,
 O when shall modern bard like him be fired!
 Give me but leisure to attend his lays,
 I care not, though my rhymes be ne'er admired.
 For sweeter joy his matchless strain shall raise
 Than courts of Kings can yield, with pensions, posts, and praise. (28-36)

Stanza V in 1771 edition (will be revised in subsequent editions as stanza IV)

Fret not thyself, thou man of modern song,
 Nor violate the plaister of thy hair;
 Nor to that dainty coat do aught of wrong;
 Else how shalt thou to Cesar's hall repair?
 (For ah! no damaged coat can enter there).
 Fret not thyself, that I, a simple wight,
 Of thee, and thy trim brethren, take no care,
 But of poor old-fashion'd pilgrim write,
 Whom thou wouldst shun, I ween, as most unseemly sight. (37-45)

Stanza IV in 1774 edition (slightly altered in 1776, and greatly altered in 1784)

Fret not yourselves, ye silken sons of pride
 That a poor Wanderer inspires my strain.
 The Muses fortune's fickle smile deride,
 Nor ever bow the knee in Mammon's fane;
 For their delights are with the village train,
 Whom Nature's laws engage, and Nature's charms:
 They hate the sensual, and scorn the vain;
 The parasite their influence never warms,
 Nor him whose sordid soul the love of wealth alarms. (28-36)

Changes made in '76: "That a poor Wanderer should inspire my strain." (29)
 "For their delights are with the village-train." (32)

Stanza IV in 1779 and 1784 editions

Fret not thyself, thou glittering child of pride,
 That a poor Villager inspires my strain;
 With thee let Pageantry and Power abide:
 The gentle Muses haunt the sylvan reign;
 Where through wild groves at eve the lonely swain
 Enraptured roams, to gaze on Nature's charms.
 They hate the sensual, and scorn the vain,
 The parasite their influence never warms,

Nor him whose sordid soul the love of gold alarms. (28-36)

Lines 19-20 in '76:

"This sapient age disclaims all classic lore; / Else I should here in cunning phrase display"

Revised lines 19-20 in '84:

"The rolls of fame I will not now explore; / Nor need I here describe in learned lay."

Line 379 in '76: "Ah me! abandon'd on the lonesome plain,"

Revised in '84: "Ah me! neglected on the lonesome plain,"

Line 458 in '76: "This art preposterous renders more unfit;"

Revised in '84: "This idle art makes more and more unfit;"

Line 534 in '76: "But if --- on this labour smile,"

Revised in '84: But on this verse if MONTAGU should smile,"

Textual Changes to Book II of The Minstrel

1784 edition adds a stanza between the XXXIV and XXXIII of the '74, '76, and '79 editions.

"Ambition's slippery verge shall mortals tread,
Where ruin's gulf, unfathom'd, yawns beneath?
Shall life, shall liberty be lost," he said,
"For the vain toys that Pomp and Power bequeath?
The car of victory, the plume, the wreath
Defend not from the bolt of fate the brave:
No note the clarion of Renown can breathe,
To alarm the long night of the lonely grave,
Or check the headlong haste of time's o'erwhelming wave. (298-306)

Line 494 in '76: "Sublime from cause to cause exults to rise"
Revised as 503 in '84: "Aloft from cause to cause exults to rise"

Line 530 in '76: "Gracefully terrible, sublimely strong,"
Revised as 539 in '84: "Without art graceful, without effort strong,"

Line 550 in '76: "Art thou, my G*****, for ever fled!"
Revised as 559 in '84: "Art thou, my GREGORY, for ever fled!"

Beattie's notes in the 1784 Edition

"The southern Sun diffused his dazzling shene.*" I.XXII.194.

* Brightness, splendour. The word is used by some late writers, as well as Milton.

"The yellow moonlight sleeps on all the hills;*" II.XXIII.204.

* How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank. Shakespeare

Excerpts from Lectures on Moral Philosophy AUL MS 30/49a

10. Philosophy is the knowledge of the appearances of nature and of their causes. It is useful first because it exercises and consequently improves the faculties of the human mind; 2^{dly}, because it gives pleasure, by gratifying curiosity; 3^{rdly} because it leads to the (2) knowledge of the Deity; and 4th because it regulates human practice, and enlarges human power. Without some knowledge of nature, man could not act whether in pursuing good, or in avoiding evil. Brutes have little knowledge of nature; but their want is in them supplied by instinct, which directs them to do what is necessary, to answer the end of their creation.

The Philosophy of the Human Mind

17. This we divide into two parts. In the 1st we shall treat of the faculties or powers of the human mind; in the 2^d we shall prove it to be immaterial and immortal.

18. These have been long ago reduced to two, Perception & Volition. The former comprehends all those powers of our nature by which we acquire knowledge; and to the latter are referred all those faculties, which more immediately prompt us to action. This division is not accurate, but it will serve our purpose well enough.

19. Our perceptive faculties may perhaps be all comprehended under the following. 1st External Sense. 2^{dly} Consciousness, reflexion, or internal sense. 3^{rdly} Memory. 4^{thly} Imagination or Fancy. 5^{thly} Dreaming. 6th Abstraction, 7^{thly} the faculty of speech, whereby we perceive whatever passes in the minds of one another. 8^{thly} Reason, by which we perceive the difference between truth and falsehood, & lastly conscience or the Moral faculty, whereby we distinguish between virtue and vice. Of these we shall speak in their order. (5)

Of External Sense

20. This is that faculty, by which the focusing the body as an instrument, perceives corporeal things & their qualities. All animals have it in a greater or less degree; and every complete animal has it in that precise degree, which is necessary to its life and wellbeing. Corporeal things, when present to our senses, & attended to by us, affect our bodies in a certain manner, and so are perceived by the mind. But we cannot tell how this came to pass, we are only sure of the fact. What affects the outward parts of our body may affect those inward parts, which are called nerves, and animal spirits; but in what way these last may affect the mind, we know not; being quite ignorant of the nature of that union which subsists between human soul and body.

21. Our perception of corporeal things is accompanied with a belief that they exist, and are present with us; and this belief is unavoidable, and amounts to absolute certainty.

22. Let us here distinguish between the faculty perceiving, the external object perceived, and the action of perception itself. Take sight for example. The faculties of seeing is in the mind, and is a permanent thing and sometimes is exerted and at present, and some (6) times is not exerted, as when we shut our eyes, or go into a dark place. The thing seen, the Sun for instance, is also a permanent thing, and exists without us, or externally, whether perceived or not. The perception itself is in the mind, and is there no longer than while the act of perception continues, for by shutting our eyes we put an end to it, and by opening them we renew it again. All these three are sometimes called by the same name, which makes it the more necessary to distinguish them so particularly.

24. We must also distinguish between the faculties of the mind, and the mind itself. As running, walking dancing are not the body, but only different ways in which the body exerts itself, so Memory, Reason, Sight, Touch, Hearing, are not the soul (7) but only different ways in which the soul exerts itself. Our faculties are sometimes exerted, and sometimes not exerted, but our soul and our body are always the same, being two permanent substances, the one material, the other immaterial. (8)

Of Imitation

Man is of all creatures the most prone to imitation, & takes great pleasure in it. By imitating others we learn to speak to walk and to do many other things long before we are capable of attending, to rules, or even of understanding them. There is pleasure in beholding a good imitation of object, th' the object itself might be indifferent or perhaps disagreeable, as good pictures of a common plant, a wild beast or even of a dead man. A picture equally good of a beautiful object gives still greater pleasure. And this pleasure arises chiefly from our admiration of the skill displayed in the works of pictures, statues, and the like representations, [which] are valued in proportion to the genius & characteristics they show to have been in the artist, especially when the design is moral or at least innocent. Painting, poetry, & music are not necessary to life; but they give pleasure & adorn human society and are therefore called fine (139) arts. They are so called imitative arts, because in them nature is supposed to be imitated; in music by means of sounds in painting by means of colours; in poetry by means of language. (140)

Of the General Nature of Poetry

The practice of writing poetry is very ancient and some think even more ancient than prose which however is not strictly true, as the writings of Moses, the most ancient in the world are in prose, though many fine poetical passages are to be found in them. History does not inform us for what reason it was that men first thought of putting their sentiments in verse; a work which is attended with some difficulty, and which therefore there must have been some good reason for their attempting. We are told by Horace, that laws were antiently expressed in verse; no doubt that they might be more easily remembered.

But this, tho' it may have happened in some countries, was never a general practice. The essential rules of Poetry, and consequently (225) its general nature are, like those of every rational art, to be inferred philosophically from its end or destination.

That one end of Poetry in all ages has been to give pleasure can admit no doubt. For why should a man take the trouble to put his thoughts in verses if by so doing, he did not render them agreeable; and to continue fables, if those fables had not something in them which people would take pleasure to read or hear.

History & Philosophy aim at instruction as their chief end; and if they accomplish this end, they are allowed to have merit. But verses however instructive have no poetical merit; unless they be agreeable. The Philosopher & the Historian please that they may instruct the more effectually: the poet instructs that he may the more effectually please. Instruction therefore is one end of Poetry, but it is a secondary one; and we do not estimate the degree of poetical merit by the quality of instruction conveyed in the poem. For it is a certain fact, that the more instructive books in the world are written in plain prose. (227)

“In Lucretius too there are many fine sentiments and descriptions expressed with great elegance & harmony but unfortunately mixed with the absurdities of the Epicurean philosophy.” (471)

Hints for an Answer to Dr Priestley's Remarks on the Essay on Truth AUL MS 30/46

The empty pages in the notebook suggest Beattie's remarks on all subjects were never finished. In the right hand corner of the MS: "By reading Dr P's remarks no body could form first any notion pf the Essay on Truth; which is strange if there are a sufficient answer to the other" (1).

Contents as listed: Preliminary remarks- p.1, Of the term Common Sense-5, Of the Evidence of Sense-8, Miscellaneous remarks-30, Of Liberty & Necessity-12, Moral Obligation-18.

Preliminary Remarks

The design of The Essay on Truth twofold. 1. To confute some of the most dangerous errors of the most dangerous errors of the modern Scepticism;⁶ and of Mr Hume's philosophy in particular. 2. To exhibit such a view of the theory of Evidence as might secure the human mind against the influence of Sceptical opinions in general. 1. The first of these ends Dr P. himself acknowledges that the book may answer and actually has answered; and he allows further that by so doing it has been and still may be useful to the cause of Religion.—He says indeed that Mr Hume's tenets are not dangerous, and he is greatly pleased with such writings. I cannot reconcile these two opinions. But this I am certain of, because I know it to be a fact, that Mr Hume's writings have done great harm to society (whatever pleasure Dr P. may take in them)—& that the Essay on Truth has been so fortunate as in some considerable degree to counteract their pernicious influence. If all this be true, it must be a good and useful book; even though the general theory of Evidence laid down it should be (as Dr P. says) both new & false. (1)

Along with this compliment paid by Dr P. there is a censure which Dr P. no doubt intended for a severe one. He allows some of my [?] on Mr Hume to be just; but says, that my answer to that author, though lively, are superficial, and that none but superficial thinkers could receive either good from these then, or harm from Mr Hume. Well, be it so; if my book has done good even to superficial thinkers, it is still useful; and if Mr Hume's superficial absurdities are sufficiently ['answered' but B puts line through it] I do not care though Dr P. say, that they are superficially answered. By saying that Hume's philosophy is superficial, Dr P. no doubt meant to [vilify] me: and yet it is saying no more than I myself have said once and again in the Essay: and, though Dr P. very injuriously charges me with entertaining a high opinion of my book and talents, it is certain that I have said, "that I disclaim all ambition of being thought a suitable disputant, that I never took pleasure in an argumentation, and have not once made controversy my study; that I aim at no paradoxes, and would not wish to say any thing of the evidence of Truth but what has often occasioned to the common sense of mankind." See also the first and second paragraphs of the second part of the Essay on Truth.

2. As to the theory of evidence laid down in the Essay, Dr P. constantly represents it as new, and repeats against me the charge of arrogance and insolence for attempting to obtrude it on the publick. And yet I am certain that it is not new; and I do maintain that Dr Priestly could

⁶ At this point on the manuscript is written: "Sceptical philos" but drawn through.

not be ignorant, that in my (2) opinion at least, it was as old as literature; nay as human nature itself. What my own opinion of it was when I wrote my book, and whether I deserve to be called insolent (a word of which Dr P. indulges himself in a most nauseous repetition) the publick will judge from the general tenor of my book and from the following passages in particular. p. 25. p. 28. p. 27 (3).

Notes written on (4): See a Theory of the Human Mind, in vol. 3 of Davies's collection of fugitive [?] see particularly, p. 182.

Lord Chesterfield, in one of his letters (Vol. 2 or 3) speaking of Berkeley's Theory, uses the term Common Sense in the same meaning which is given so it is in the Essay on Truth.

J. Butlers Sermons vol. 1 p. 71.

Of the Term Common Sense

It is allowed in the Essay we have used this term to a peculiarly strict sense, and that there are [various?] ways in which it is commonly used. But it is hinted in the same Essay that the use we apply it to is according to the analogy of language. Now is not this the case? Sense besides the external faculties of perception, means Perception of Intellect, Apprehension of Mind, Understanding, Soundness of Faculties, Strength of Natural Reason, Judgement, Consciousness, Conviction, and Moral Perception. See Johnson's Dictionary. Word Sense. What is more common than to say, he seems to have no sense of right and wrong.

In an argument, suppose a man to refuse his assent to an Intuitive principle of any sort, What would you say to him? —“What do you say that a whole is greater than a part?—Yes, Sir: I desire you to prove it.—Prove it? It admits of no proof. You talk absurdly. I will reason no longer with you.”— This I own is to be a very proper answer. But would it not also be proper enough to say “Sir, it admits of no proof: but I appeal to yourself, I appeal to the common sense of mankind, is it not true that a whole is greater than a part?”—If this might be said even in math truth, it might be said with equal an perhaps more propriety, in [answer?] to any intuitive notions; moral [?], inference in regard to probability, the belief of a cause being needed to the production of which has a beginning. (5)

Suppositions of the intellect are sometimes in the Essay on Truth called Feelings. And Feeling is in English used to signify Perception in general. And to feel sometimes denotes to have a quick sensibility of right and wrong. See Johnson. Is there not then sufficient warrant for the use of this word in a work written in a popular style? Dr P. will not show that I run into any doctrine inconsistent with the general doctrine of the Essay by the use of this word.

An doctrine instinctively absurd may be said to be contrary to the nature of things: and may not the belief of such a doctrine be said to be contrary to the common sense of mankind. (6)

Of the Evidence of Senses

When I dip a straight stick in water, it seems crooked; when I take it out, it appears straight.—I believe my sense in both cases. That the visible appearance of the stick in the water is crooked, I do most firmly believe, because I rust my eyes, which are the only proper judges of visible appearance: that the stick is straight I also believe on the evidence of my sight, and of my touch; I see it straight in a pure medium; therefore I believe it to be so—the belief follows the perception immediately. I perceive also by touch that it is straight—and therefore I believe it straight. Were I to doubt my senses, I should neither believe nor disbelieve in either case. Every man believes as I do in this matter; even Dr P. himself.

See Collier's Essays. Part 2. p.86.

Dr P. must not suppose, that I am the only person who thinks Berkeley's scheme not an innocent one. I shall give him the opinion of two authors, whose opinion he will perhaps value the more that they are both fatalists, and both of them disapprove most vehemently of the Essay on Truth. They are Mr Hume, & the author of Essays on Moral & Nat Religion, (in upper margin says 'cook') supposed to be written by Lord Kaims, and often quoted in his works. See Hume Sceptical Phy—and Kaims on morals. p.240, 241. (8)

Liberty and Necessity

Dr P. says I will not reason with him nor admit any reasoning in regard to the doctrine of Necessity, which he seems to think certainly true & a late discovery.—To satisfy him that I have no intention to preclude reasoning on any subject, I refer to his consideration Essay on T. p.366. When a new tenet &c. and p.374 and 377.

This seems to be a discovery of a very strange sort. Dr P. grants that it is extremely unpopular and likely to continue so,—in other words that men in general disbelieve it. That in some ages men disbelieved it is evidently Dr P's opinion, from his supposing it to be new—and likewise from some conceptions he makes in regard to language; which he allows to seem [superior] to any doctrine. Yet he says, that no man can understand this new doctrine but one who enters on the study of it very early in life, & studies it in a particular way. Consequently, as in such that I do not now understand it, it must follow that I never can understand it as in early part of my life how then should I be first to argue about it. This is strange language in philosophy. It might have passed among Rosicrucian adepts, or among those who distinguish between Esoterick & Exoterick doctrines—but to use it now a days & in Great Britain is a strange thing. Nobody supposes, that the Copernican theory is equally obtuse & equally dubious; every body who understand it & the grounds of it believes it. And any man of mariner parts may in a short time be made to comprehend both. And yet the evidence of human liberty is in our own breast; and that (12) of Coperinican theory is connected with very remote objects. (See L Kaims in liberty & Necess. Essays in Nat. Rel. p. 202, and Mamhin')

⁷ Though Beattie's note here is unclear, it is likely a reference to Kames's Sketches on the History of Man (1774), which includes a section on logic and morality.

The doctrine of Liberty is more intimately connected with our actions & conduct; that of Copernicus not in the least. Modes of expression therefore which imply that the earth stands still & the sun moves, may be used without the least inconvenience notwithstanding the true system of the universe is now discovered, especially considering that the majority of mankind⁸ know nothing of it and believe nothing. But if every man were now to be convinced that necessity is true, that no past action of his life could have been different from what it is, it is certain that a great change must take place in language; because the thoughts of men in regard to what is the object of the daily conversation and meditation, i.e. in regards to their own actions and conduct, must be totally changed.

I join heartily in confession which says “We have done the things we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us.” But if it ran thus, “We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and which it was not in our power to avoid doing; we have left undone those things which we ought to have done but which it was not in our power to do,” —I would not join it; for in truth I should not understand it. The one part of it would seem to me to be contrasted with the other. (13)

Dr P. supposes, that there is as palpable a contradiction in the doctrine of the Trinity, and in supposing the Divine presence consistent with man’s free will, as in transubstantiation.

1. In the scripture doctrine of the Trinity, there is no contradiction. There are the [ink blocking word] in the Godhead, and then three are one God. There is no contradicting lore, if it had been, there are three persons in the Godhead, and that those are one person—This had been contrary & synonymous to there is one & one is three. When a human creature attempts to explain this doctrine further than the scripture has explained it, he may from his ignorance of the subject & from the wickedness of his faculties, & from the insufficiency of human language, run into absurdity and contradiction. But the doctrine, of the Trinity, as we read in scripture, implies nothing contradictory to my reason.

2. Transubstantiation implies a palpable absurdity. The object of this union is Body, a thing which is corporeally present to our senses, and of which, if of any thing, we have reason to think ourselves competent judges. At least this we certainly know of body,—that one body is not another, and that one and the same body cannot be in a thousand different places at the same time.—When Christ said to his disciples—pointing to the bread he had just broke, this bread is my body—it was not possible for them to understand the expression in a literal sense—for they saw his body and that bread at one and the same instant and that the one was not the other. They saw this as plainly as I now see and speak with concurrence. That this book is not that Candlesticks.—They must therefore have understood the expression to be topical.

3. As to the Divine Presence which Dr P most falsely asserts that I seem willing to stick out of my greedy (14)

⁸ * the attributes of language.

Moral Obligations

Into the subject of moral obligation I have not entered further in the Essay on Truth, than just to show, that there are first principles in Morals as in other sciences, which are perceived by the light of their own evidence, and carry a degree of conviction along with them which no man supposes fallacious. Thus that it is right to be grateful to a benefactor, just in our dealings, faithful to our promises, and wrong to be ungrateful, unjust, deceitful, are what we may call moral axioms, whereof no man could doubt the truth without incurring in some measure the charge of irrationality. But now what is the evidence of these axioms? That the observance of them lead to the happiness of mankind is clear from experience. This motive to the practice of virtue is an inference of reason founded on what we know of human affairs, and ultimately resolvable into those intuitive axioms, or instinctive properties which are the sound action of all experiences. But if it be asked, what is our obligation to do that which contributes to the happiness of mankind? I know not what answer can be given but this, that there is something in our nature, call it what you please, Conscience, Reason, (18)

Commonsense, Judgement, which intimates to every rational being, and with a very strong and low voice to every good man, that such is our duty—I say I know of no other answer but this, or saying that will communicate in this one. If it be said, it is the will of God that I should do this; the question still remains, Whence is your obligation to obey the will of God? It may be outward, because it is highly reasonable and right to obey the will of God?—How knew you that? There is something in my nature that gives me such a suggestion and I cannot help being sensible of it;—for such is the frame of my constitution.

This is no more than a hint; and in the Essay on Truth I have given no more. And I have told the reason of my being so brief in this part of my subject; or—if Dr P pleases, so superficial. It is because in my attempts at a further discussion of the subject, I found it swell to such a vast extent, and take in such a variety of materials, as would make a book superior in size to the Essay itself. A slight sketch of one part of what I intended on the subject (written before the Essay on Truth was published) extends to upwards of 100 large quarto pages closely written. I found that there were or at least seemed to me to be mistakes to be rectified in some of the commonly received theories of moral sentiment; and that I had a prodigious number of obligations to answer in regard to unchallenged and immorality of moral actions, some of which objections necessarily led (19) me into historical as well as philosophical disquisitions of very great length. I found, that I should have a very great number of books to read (particularly of history and travels) before I could collect materials sufficient to do justice to their part of my system; in a word I found that when I set on foot an inquiry into the first principles of moral evidence, I had engaged in what must be the work of years. And therefore I thought it better to give the hint abovementioned (which in the Essay takes up at best four pages)—and to give the publick notice of the imperfection of it which I have done at page 213 and of my design to persecute this part of the work afterwards. I still mean to do so; but have hitherto been prevented, and I know not how long this may be the case, by bad health and some many accidents a detail of with which I need not trouble the publick.

That an apportion to some of the first principles of moral duty is highly absurd and irrational, may be made clear by an example. (20)

Miscellaneous Remarks

Dr P. says he has endeavoured to lay the axe to the root of the [sound and central?] principles of my virtue truth &c. —I allow, that he has actually laid it. But an ax laid to the root of a tree may be a very harmless thing. Before it do harm to the said tree there must be a strong arm to wield it and certainty too of sharpness in the edge:--Dr P. seems to misapprehend the scripture allegory to which he here alludes.

In the P.S. to the Essay on Truth is this passage. 1. "That the human soul is a real and permanent substance; 2. that God is infinitely wise and good; 3. that virtue and vice are essentially different; 4. that there is such a thing as truth, and that man in many cases is capable of discovering it:--are some of the principles which this book is intended to vindicate from the objects of Scepticism." Dr P. quotes this passage, and says that he does not find I have demonstrated any of these points in my book, & therefore represents the passage itself as a false assertion, and an instance of my arrogance and self-conceit. But pray—what is it I have said here? That I have demonstrated these points. No—but that I have endeavoured to vindicate them from the objections of the Scepticks. And have I not done this? Mr Hume's objections to the first point are answered—Essay on T. p.255, 81, &c.—His objections, to the commonly received argument for the Divine existence and attribute, are answered p. 102-120. His theory of moral and intellectual virtue, which confounds all our moral notions, is answered p.407-432. and the Sceptical objections to the reality of truth are answered passion.—But why did you not demonstrate, what you say you have only vindicated?—Because that in my opinion has long ago been done by others. (30)

If Dr P. say, that the human soul has no existence distinct from the body of that the existence of the body is only a probability, does he not make his own existence a probability? I would ask them, whether he is more certain of a geometrick tenth than of his own existence; if not, then the axioms of demonstrations of Euclid come no higher than probability. See the 3d volume of his *Sens. Of Religion* p. 196-197.

Dr P. wonders that I should quote Dr Hartley only to contradict him. Is this more astonishing, than that he should quote St. Luke St. Matthew and St. Mark only to contradict them?—Which I think he does in speaking of the story of the penitent thief. Let Dr P.'s reverence from Dr H. be as high as it will, mine is as high at least for the Evangelists.

Dr P.'s abilities in charity and in some parts of Natural Philosophy I allow to be considerable; ... (31)

Beattie's Day Book, volume 2 1776-1798 AUL MS 30/15, February 20 1778. p. 24

I reprint this entry here because it is not to be found in Ralph S. Walker's printed version of the Day-Book, though its contents are relevant to Beattie's decision to publish the volume of his poems which appeared in 1779.

"Having lately seen in print some poems ascribed to me which I never wrote, and some of my own very inaccurately copied, I came to a resolution some time ago to print in one volume all the poems, whereof I am willing to be considered as the Author; namely The Minstrel 2 books, Retirement an Ode; An Elegy 'still shall unthinking man &c'; Ode to Hope; The Pygmies and Cranes from the Latin of Addison, The Hares a fable; Epitaph on the Hon Mrs G.; Ode on Lord Hay's Birthday, and the Hermit:—renouncing all my other poems as juvenile and incorrect. Of these poems I give the copyright to Mr Dilly and Mr Creech in return for some favours I have received from them, particularly their refusing to take money for the trouble of distributing the subscription copies of my Quarto. Of this I gave notice to Dilly sometime ago, and sent him a corrected copy of these poems; designing him however to show them to Mrs Montagu before putting them to the press; and requesting it of her to suppress such of them as she thought would do me no credit.—She has read them all accordingly; approves of their being printed, and says they will do me honour. They go to press in a few days.—To be printed by Mr Strahan; the sheets to be corrected by myself. 15 March.

From "The Hares, a Fable" Poems on Several Subjects (1766)

"Oh hapless race! Fate's scorn and sport,
 "Beset with ills of every sort,
 "And curs'd with keenest sense to feel
 "The sharpest sting of every ill!
 "We sure by nature were design'd
 "Most wretched of the wretched kind.
 "Say ye, who, fraught with mighty scheme,
 "Of liberty and vengeance dream,
 "What now remains! To what recess
 "Shall we our weary steps address,
 "Since fate is evermore pursuing
 "All ways and means to work our ruin?
 "Are we alone, of all beneath,
 "Condemn'd to misery worse than death?
 "Must we with fruitless labour strive
 "In misery worse than death to live?
 "No. Be the smaller ill our choice;
 "So dictates Nature's prompting voice.
 "'Tis Nature bids us dare to die,
 "And disappoint our destiny.
 "Who grudges momentary grief,

"To gain from woe even short relief?
 "Death's pangs but for a moment last;
 "And when that transient ill is past,
 "Our sorrows are for ever fled;
 "For not even dreams molest the dead."
 Thus while he spoke, his words impart
 The dire resolve to every heart. (167-94)

Same stanza revised stanza for Poems on Several Occasions (1776)

"O wretched race, the scorn of Fate,
 "Whom ills of every sort await!
 "O, curs'd with keenest sense to feel
 "The sharpest sting of every ill!
 "Say ye, who, fraught with mighty scheme,
 "Of liberty and vengeance dream,
 "What now remains? To what recess
 "Shall we our weary steps address,
 Since fate is evermore pursuing
 "All ways and means to work our ruin?
 "Are we alone, of all beneath,
 "Condemn'd to misery worse than death!
 "Must we, with fruitless labour, strive
 "In misery worse than death to live!
 "No. Be the smaller ill our choice:
 "So dictates Nature's powerful voice.
 "Death's pang will in a moment cease;
 "And then, All hail, eternal peace!"
 Thus while he spoke, his words impart
 The dire resolve to every heart. (112-32)

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